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ABSTRACT

A publication of the Primary English Teaching Association of Australia, this book argues that children should be taught how to write in the various genres or kinds of writing that are needed for different purposes. The contributors draw on their own experiences to show how teachers can develop their teaching of writing to realize the full potential of the process approach and at the same time draw upon insights associated with a genre approach. Chapters and their authors consist of the following: (1) "Building on the Process" (John Collerson); (2) "What Are These Genres, Anyway?" (John Collerson); (3) "Read Me Your Story..." (Jennifer Hammond); (4) "Let Me Demonstrate" (Helen Woodward); (5) "Writing in a Family Group Class" (Lee Pledger); (6) "Writing Reports in Year 4" (Elizabeth O'Connell); (7) "The Narrative Genre in Years 3 and 4" (Ross Weightman); (8) "Working with Factual Writing in Year 5" (Dallas Tonkin); (9) "Providing a Balance" (Lorraine Rowles with Jennifer Hammond); (10) "Writing across the Secondary School" (Bill Crowley); and (11) "Writing for Life" (John Collerson). Appended are a guide to factul materials for primary schools, suggested reading selections, and a list of 19 references. (MS)

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Writing for Life

edited by

John Collerson

PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHING ASSOCIATION

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Foreword

The last decade has been an exciting time for those Australian teachers entrusted with children's literacy development. First Donald Graves revolutionised our beliefs and practices with regard to the teaching of writing. Notions such as 'conference' and 'process' are now part of the thinking of most Australian primary teachers. Then Brian Cambourne showed us how the conditions under which young children naturally acquire spoken language can be successfully applied to the learning of the written language in classrooms. Through his work we have become aware of the importance of immersing children in meaningful print and the value of teacher demonstrations of various literacy behaviours.

PETA is justly proud of its role in assisting teachers to understand and implement these developments through its many publications by authors such as Bob Walshe and Jan Turbill. PETA's main objectives are to act as a forum for the sharing of ideas about children's language development, and to provide practical materials which will assist teachers in fostering each child's growth in spoken and written language. To this end the PETA Board welcomes any discussion about approaches to school literacy development, provided the outcome is a positive one for teachers and children.

Recently some new developments in the teaching of writing have been put forward by a group of linguists. They have expressed a concern that among other things too strong an emphasis is placed upon 'story writing' in primary classrooms, without regard for children's need to learn to write different kinds of texts for different purposes and audiences during their education and their future lives. Those promoting a 'genre approach' are particularly interested in 'across the curriculum' opportunities for non-narrative writing.

It has become evident that the differences between the 'process approach' and the 'genre approach' have been grossly exaggerated, to the extent that they appear to be at educational war with one another. This is both unfortunate and unnecessary.

Writing for Life therefore is an important and most timely publication. John Collerson has drawn together a team of practising educators, both teachers and researchers, committed to realising the full potential of process writing, while also drawing upon insights associated with a genre approach. The accounts of their classroom experiences clearly demonstrate that there is no need for a schism. When the need for various types of writing arises naturally from the rich context of classroom experiences across the curriculum, it is clear that different genres of writing can be taught within a process writing framework.

Vivienne Nicoll
May 1988

Acknowledgements

A book like this is based on the work and help of many people. I know that I can speak for all the contributors in acknowledging the help and support of school students, teaching colleagues, school executives, family members and friends.

I am grateful to the many teachers and principals who have allowed me to come into their classrooms, in particular Mary-Ellen Betts, Gary Halloran, Roslyn McClure, John Russell, Barbara Sheerin and Trevor Somerville.

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I've had the benefit of many discussions with Jim Martin, Joan Rothery (who read and commented on a draft of Chapter 2), John Carr, Frances Christie, Michael Halliday, Ruqaiya Hasan, Gunther Kress and Geoff Williams. I have also had valuable talks with Donald Graves, Donald Murray, Tom Newkirk and Bob Walshe.

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J. C.

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The Contributors

John Collerson is a senior lecturer in the School of Education and Language Studies at Macarthur Institute of Higher Education.

Bill Crowley is the Head Teacher, English, at Normanhurst Boys' High School in Sydney. From 1984 to 1986 he was a consultant with the NSW Department of Education, working on the Writing K-12 Project, especially on secondary writing across the curriculum.

Jennifer Hammond is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong.

Elizabeth O'Connell is a teacher at Chipping Norton Public School in Sydney.

Lee Pledger is a consultant with the NSW Department of Education. At the time of writing she was a teacher at North Sydney Demonstration School.

Lorraine Rowles is the Assistant Principal (Infants) at Bonnyrigg Public School in Sydney. At the time of writing she was a teacher at Fairy Meadow Demonstration School in Wollongong.

Bernadette Schultz is a teacher-librarian at St Thomas More Primary School, Campbelltown, NSW.

Dallas Tonkin is a teacher at Paddington Public School in Sydney. At the time of writing she was a teacher at Lurnea Public School in Sydney.

Ross Weightman is the Acting Assistant Principal (Infants) at Mount Pritchard East Public School in Sydney. At the time of writing he was a teacher at Chipping Norton Public School in Sydney.

Helen Woodward is a lecturer in the School of Education and Language Studies at Macarthur Institute of Higher Education. She was until the end of 1985 a teacher and an assistant principal in the Wollongong area.

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John Collerson

BUILDING ON THE PROCESS

Writing at school these days is something to look forward to. In writing time the classroom is a scene of purposeful activity — not always quiet, but busy and productive. Some students are sitting and writing; a few pairs or small groups are reading each other's drafts; some are illustrating their published pieces, and one or two are just sitting, perhaps trying to get started on a new piece. Two students are having a brief conference with the teacher. There are dictionaries and personal spelling lists to be consulted and plenty of things to read. Now and then students will go over to move their name card on the chart which shows the teacher what stage they've reached. The teacher too will move about from time to time, pausing to read someone's draft or give a helpful suggestion to someone who might be drifting away from the task at hand. On the whole students are busy with their writing, their publishing or their reading, and they don't really want to stop.

An idealistic picture you might think — nevertheless it is an ideal for which many teachers aim and which is not too far from the reality that many children experience in their daily writing workshops. Anyone unfamiliar with the progress that's been made in the teaching of writing over the last few years will be surprised at what they find if they visit a classroom at writing time. Many teachers and parents have been surprised at what children are able to do.

Writing has received a good deal of attention lately from teachers and others and we have seen some significant developments. This focus on writing has certainly been justified. Learning to write effectively is a very important part of our students' education and the ability to do so can be a great asset throughout their lives. But do we really need another book about writing? What more is there to be said? Hasn't the great revolution in the teaching of writing already taken place?

Well, we have come a long way in the past few years: there's no doubt about that. What we knew as 'written expression' ten or more years ago has clearly changed in many schools to something more likely to be called 'process writing' or 'writing time', and there is much talk of drafting, invented spelling, conferences, revising and publication. While there are still some traditionalists, many teachers nowadays have adopted what has become known as the process approach and 'writing' has come to mean something different from 'written expression'. And not only are things being done differently; there is also a different attitude about. Both teachers and students are more interested in writing — even enthusiastic about it.

Many teachers have been using the process approach for several years now and no longer think of it as a new thing. With this kind of experience to look back on, some teachers are expressing concerns about some aspects of it. That is probably inevitable. Changes come about in order to meet certain needs. Once these needs are taken care of, other needs become more noticeable, and so further developments and changes are proposed.

That is what seems to be going on at the moment. Some teachers and others are exploring further possibilities — ways of building on the process approach and making the most of its potential. In this book we are going to look at some of these to see what they mean for teachers in primary schools. The contributors to the book are either teachers currently working in schools, or else former teachers who continue to work closely with teachers and students as they maintain their interest in children's writing development.

Process and conference

Process and *conference* have been two of the buzz words in the teaching of writing in the last few years, and both have been used to describe the approach which has been widely taken up in our schools. At first it was usually called 'the conference approach', but nowadays 'process' seems to be the popular term amongst teachers. No term is really satisfactory because it is hard to sum up a whole approach in a single word. Yet we need a convenient label, and 'the process approach' will serve our purpose.

This book does not provide a detailed account of how to apply the process approach in the classroom — that has already been done very well by other people — and so if the whole idea is new to you, you ought to go to one of the books listed in *Suggested Reading* (p. 119) and, if possible, consult an experienced colleague. However, to avoid any misunderstanding, I do want to make clear what I mean by the process approach. There are four central elements.

1 **The process itself.** Writing is treated as a process. It usually begins with some kind of rehearsal for writing. It may involve more than one draft of the text, which means that there is the possibility of revision, editing and proofreading. With some texts the process will continue through to some form of publication and some response from readers.

2 The conference. This simply means that there are opportunities for the writer to talk about the writing with other children or with the teacher or with another adult. This interaction may occur at any stage in the process — even before the writing has begun.

3 Ownership. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own writing so that they have some sense of ownership or control. They may decide on the topic, the form, the revision necessary and whether or not it will be published. In general they should feel that they have some personal stake in their writing.

4 Time for writing. In this approach writing is not just an occasional once-a-week affair but an activity which children are able to practise every day (Walshe 1981, pp. 124-32).

There are other things associated with the process approach, such as invented spelling, but the four points outlined above really form its essence.

There is almost inevitably some variation from one school to another — even from one teacher to another — in the way the process approach is applied. There are differing levels of understanding of the underlying philosophy. Some teachers may be applying just a partial version of the approach, and there will be all sorts of variation over details, such as how conferences are handled, or whether drafts are loose-leaf and kept in folders or written in a draft book. To talk about an 'approach' perhaps makes it sound more coherent and clear-cut than it is in practice, but at least the central features are generally recognised.

The potential power of process

The process approach has certainly had a positive effect on the teaching of writing and on the attitude to writing on the part of both teachers and students. It represents a significant change from earlier practices. Let us remind ourselves of some of its benefits.

Writers have something to say to their readers. As students are encouraged to find their own topics for writing — and are taught how to do so — they are more likely to see writing as a form of communication, instead of just something they have to do at school. They write because they have something to say (which may be different from what others are writing) and because they have readers interested in reading what they have to say. Their readers are not just their teachers but also their fellow students and various people beyond the immediate community of the classroom. The writing is not just something to be handed in to the teacher to be marked but something available for other people to read.

Writing can be rough-drafted, then polished. We've got away from the idea that the writing has to be right first time. Students learn how to draft and revise, how to proofread and polish up for publication. The conference

Having something to say — writers share the interest and enjoyment of each other's writing.

provides opportunities for this teaching, but it is the possibility of publication which provides the motivation to do the checking and polishing up. If students know that their writing is to become public and to be read by other people, they know it is worth taking the trouble to get the conventions right. Yet there is no pressure to take this trouble for every piece of writing. Many things need never be taken beyond first-draft stage.

Now, they want to write. The most important change associated with the process approach has been the change in attitudes. Teachers have become more interested in writing and more interested in reading what their students are writing. No longer is there that awful sameness and predictability about it. There are surprises every week. The enthusiasm of the teachers is matched by that of the students. The children actually want to write: they enjoy it. The process approach has been a great liberating force for both teachers and students.

One remarkable thing about the process approach is how quickly it came into the schools. Within a couple of years (1981-83) it went from a standing start to being talked about and tried out everywhere. That is oversimplifying a little, but it does seem that by about the end of the 1970s teachers were ready for a change in the approach to writing in schools. Just at that time the classroom-based research of Donald Graves and others was becoming known in Australia and Graves visited Sydney in 1980, sponsored by PETA. It was through this visit and the PETA publications of Bob Walshe and Jan Turbill

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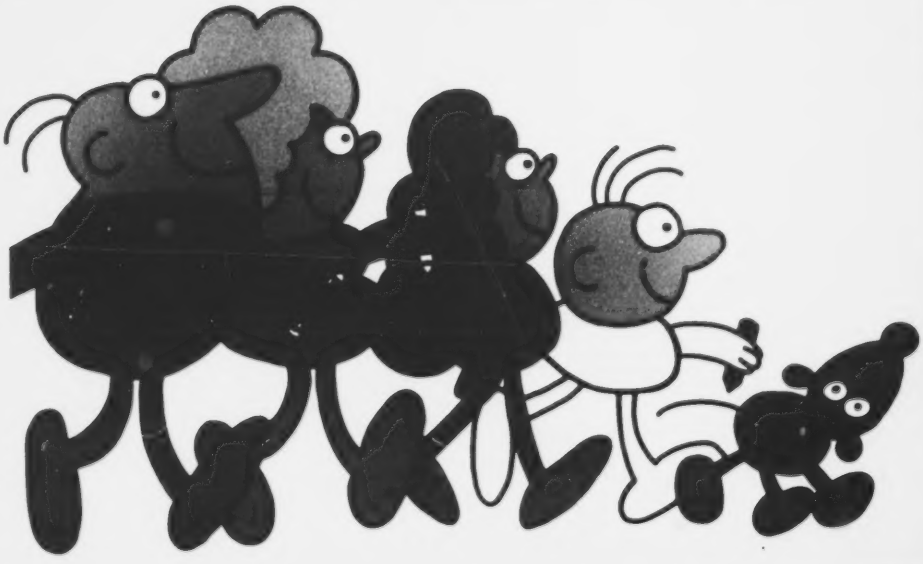

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that the process approach was made accessible to large numbers of teachers. But the fact that it took off so quickly shows that it filled a real need that teachers were aware of.

Is the potential of process fully realised?

So the process approach has made a great contribution to children's writing development, and it continues to do so. At the same time some people are uncomfortable about some aspects of it. There are some things which are not well catered for — at least in the way the approach has been applied in practice. Some teachers and others are aware of a few problems.

How well does the process approach provide for development? Development is certainly obvious in the infants grades. Yet, if children are introduced to the process approach in Kindergarten and work on it with enthusiastic teachers throughout Years 1 and 2, they have probably experienced much of what it can offer them by the time they get into Year 3. Now, it is true that a good teacher can continue to develop the range of children's writing and their control over the conventions of written language. They will continue to write about their own experience. They will continue to read and be read to and that reading experience will continue to feed their writing. The new things they are learning about as they move up through the grades will provide further stimulus for their writing.

Nevertheless there may be some teachers and some students in Years 3 or 4 who feel that their process writing has lost some of the freshness it had back in Years 1 and 2 and that they are doing much the same sort of thing over and over again. This is perhaps most obvious with those children who seem to get into a rut for a while, writing about the same topic many times in much the same way. We've all come across those boys who love to write stories full of blood and guts, and some teachers have felt a need to put a ban on such writing. This is related to another problem. There are some students who don't seem to have much variety in their out-of-school experience, apart from TV and video. What is there to nourish their writing and language development? Only what the teacher can provide for them at school.

Process writing comes to be mainly story writing. The process approach has the potential for a great variety of writing. The ideal is that if children are encouraged to choose their own topics and to write in a variety of ways about things that they know about, then over the years of primary schooling they will come to experience a wide variety of types of writing. But in practice it doesn't seem to work out that way, except for a minority of pupils. What most pupils write most of the time is stories — accounts of their own experience and fictional stories.

It's not hard to understand why. One reason is that story is given a high profile in the primary school. We read lots of stories to children, they read stories and they experience stories on TV and film. Stories play a big part in their lives. Moreover, the word *story* is commonly used in the early years of

schooling to refer to any piece of writing. *Story* just happens to be a convenient short word for this purpose. So it is not surprising that children get the idea that writing equals story. In fact many teachers talk about process writing as 'story writing'.

Thus the writing experience of most children in the primary years is heavily weighted towards narrative. The extreme form of this problem is where process writing is regarded as one specific compartment of the curriculum — one part of the school day devoted to a certain kind of writing: personal writing, stories, creative writing or whatever. The potential of the process approach for all kinds of writing in all curriculum areas is then lost.

The process is not applied across the curriculum. Some teachers who use the process approach wholeheartedly in a daily writing workshop tend not to apply it to the writing that is needed at other times in the school day: for example, in curriculum areas such as Science and Social Studies. Perhaps some teachers don't even think of applying the process approach to the writing needed in 'other' curriculum areas because they tend to think of the curriculum as a series of separate compartments. But we must admit that, even for teachers who can see the potential of the process for any writing, there could be problems. One may be the fact that topics are set. When opportunities for writing arise from topics or themes, this may seem to clash with the principle of giving students a great deal of choice over what they write about. Then there is the practical problem of time. 'If we are to conference with the children on all their writing,' some teachers may ask, 'how can we possibly get anything else done?'

So the full potential of the process approach may not have been realised everywhere. Now, there are ways around these problems which many teachers are already using. For instance, topic choice is only one aspect of the process approach, even though an important one. Children should have experience of doing some writing where the topic is provided for them, whether it arises out of the context of some theme or unit that is being dealt with in class at the time, or whether it comes from some specific purpose for writing (e.g. writing a letter seeking information or thanking someone for something). Even on these occasions the topic will often be broad enough to allow some choice for individual children. Furthermore, the time needed for applying the process can be allowed for by bringing some of the specific-purpose writing into the writing workshop. In other words, some of the class's writing sessions will be devoted to the writing needed for, say, Social Studies or Science. Thus the boundary wall between curriculum areas can be broken down.

Yet, despite these possibilities, we know that problems remain. One is that there is not much suitable reading material in non-narrative modes, compared with the wealth of children's literature available in the form of narrative. So the teacher who wants to widen the variety of reading models to which children are exposed has the problem of finding suitable material. This situation is gradually improving. More teachers are looking for good

factual material and publishers are working to supply the need. The Appendix (pp. 112-18 below) provides a guide to some of what is available.

Is there any writing going on out there?

Perhaps for some teachers, the problem with writing across the curriculum is not so much the difficulty of applying the process approach to it as the sheer difficulty of getting children to write about things for which they have to gain new information. We've all seen how children resort to copying out 'great slabs from encylopedias', producing projects sometimes beautifully presented, with very little text actually written by the children themselves. As a result some teachers may avoid getting the children to do any extended factual writing at all: they just back away from it.

But not all teachers do this. We know that numbers of teachers are exploring ways of helping children both to find information and to write it up in their own words. Some teachers are providing very specific focus questions and asking for short answers. Some are teaching children note-making and other research skills. And some are teaching children how to write in some of the specific ways that are needed in various curriculum areas, both in the primary school and also in high school.

All these things take time, but time spent in helping children to become better writers and more effective learners is time well spent. Such help is important not only for their learning in the primary school but for their progress into secondary school too. Some of the ways in which it can be given will be introduced in the next section and explored further in the rest of the book.

A focus on genre

Over the past few years some people have been looking at aspects of children's writing — and of the teaching of writing — that have not been emphasised by the process approach. These people are concerned that with the process approach some children are missing out on important aspects of their writing development — aspects which are either not mentioned or not emphasised by the process approach.

Two people who have voiced these concerns are Jim Martin and Joan Rothery. While based at the University of Sydney they have carried out research into children's writing in conjunction with teachers in several schools in Sydney. Others who have contributed to this view of children's writing are Frances Christie of Deakin University and Gunther Kress, author of *Learning to Write*. (Publications setting out their views are listed in *Suggested Reading*).

Some of the things which these people emphasise about children's writing are the following.

There are different kinds of writing. That's something we all know really, but we don't always look closely at what these different kinds involve. Quite

often when we talk about the writing that children do we lump it all together under the one name. We talk about 'stories' but we might be including several different kinds of writing under that one term. We don't always focus on the differences even though we'd have to admit they are there. For example, a letter is different from a story, and a journal entry might be different again. And what about a poem? Some poems do tell a story in verse but that's not true of all poetry. Another different kind would be an account of an excursion or a science experiment. What about a playscript or a news report or a set of instructions? Clearly there are different kinds of writing which have different purposes, different features and different structures.

Children need to learn to write in different ways. Writing is used for different purposes and children need to be able to handle different kinds of writing as they move up through the grades. This of course has long been recognised, even in traditional approaches to written expression. And it does not conflict with the process approach. But in the process approach the choice of the type of writing is left largely to the children themselves and there is some evidence to show that their choice is often rather limited (Martin & Rothery 1986; White 1986). So this ability to handle different kinds of writing has not been emphasised. Yet there is certainly a need for it. For example, public comments are made from time to time about letter writing, and as children move up through their schooling the need to be able to handle various kinds of factual writing becomes more and more insistent.

We should teach the different types of writing. As teachers, we ought to *teach* children how to write the main types of writing which they will need to be able to handle. This means that we need to be aware of the different types, their purposes, their structures and their specific features. Moreover, it means that the teacher will sometimes demonstrate a particular type of writing and guide children in their attempts to use it. In other words the teacher will see to it that children are introduced to specific types of writing, which may sometimes be done on a whole-class basis. However, this does not mean that different types should be introduced in an arbitrary way. The teaching program, including all areas of the curriculum, will provide the contexts for particular types of writing to be introduced at appropriate times.

The different types of writing are sometimes described as genres, but I have not yet said much about them. The term *genre* and the kinds of writing it refers to are explained more fully in the next chapter, and they are further explained and illustrated in many of the following chapters.

Many people also use the term *register* in discussing children's writing. *Register* also implies different kinds of language, but while *genre* refers to the overall structure and purpose of a text, *register* is more concerned with the details. For example, a written version of a story could differ in register from an oral version of the same story simply because written language differs in some ways from spoken language. Yet they are both Narrative in genre. Two Reports on different topics will differ in register in that each uses the

language of a different field. Even Reports on the same topic might differ in register if they are addressed to different audiences. Yet all these Reports would be in the same genre.

The role of the teacher

If there is to be more of a focus on the genres of children's writing, we need to consider carefully the role of the teacher. I have already mentioned this briefly but more needs to be said. In the process approach there are some opportunities for teacher intervention, especially the conference, which allows for explicit teaching of how to handle various aspects of writing. But in the process approach the teacher is largely following the children's needs and coming in with help where the need arises. It tends to be up to the individual child what kinds of writing are being tried out and what needs do arise. While there can be whole-class conferences in the process approach, intervention is directed mainly to individuals and small groups.

If the teacher is going to focus at times on a particular genre, the opportunities will normally arise from the whole program across the curriculum, and so they will be planned and organised more on a whole-class basis, though allowing for small-group and individual teaching too according to need. The genre and the topics for writing will be provided by the context created in the classroom by some theme or unit of work. This means that at times the individual choice of topic and form that normally operates in the writing workshop might be 'put on hold' while the students are learning about the new genre or some other specific aspect of writing. In the long run this focus on a particular genre opens up more choice for the children and more control of the kinds of writing appropriate to specific purposes.

It especially allows for more attention to the factual genres, though this does not mean that students will stop writing Narratives. After all, a rich diet of literature will still be vital for their literacy development. And in focussing on the Narrative genre, students may learn more about its specific structure and about different types of Narrative and thus gain more understanding of the possibilities of the Narrative genre. At other times they will be learning about kinds of writing that are quite different from Narrative. For example, Reports are structured in different ways and are used for different purposes. If students learn how to write Reports, another dimension of writing is opened for them which they can use in contexts where a Narrative might not be appropriate.

Why focus on genres?

Educators are becoming increasingly aware of how important it is for children to learn to write in a variety of genres. While in theory the process approach allows for students to experience such a variety, I have already remarked that in practice it hasn't worked out that way for many students. Their writing has been mainly accounts of personal experience and fictional

narratives, and even these are not always fully developed. They haven't had much experience of the various types of factual writing, especially where they have to cope with new information. The students who have the most difficulty are those who come from a home background not rich in experiences to support the writing program. So it is necessary for teachers to plan for some aspects of children's writing development and to teach children how to handle these aspects.

In an approach which allows students considerable freedom of choice over the kind of writing done, there is a strong tendency for girls to prefer narrative and for boys to incline towards factual writing. This means that girls have the advantage of doing well in the type of writing favoured at the primary level, but in later education, where factual writing appears more important — in the public exams, for instance — it is the boys who gain the advantage (Poynton 1985, pp. 34-36). If we build in a focus on genres, all students can be encouraged to learn to write in a range of genres which they will need both in their education and in their lives generally. We can teach them how to do so.

There are other reasons for a focus on genres as well. As the teaching of genres involves close attention to specific features of the writing, it provides a way of talking about the writing: a language shared by teacher and students. It also offers teachers a basis for evaluation and for planning the development of children's writing over a period of time.

How this can be achieved in practice will be explained and illustrated in subsequent chapters. It is part of the purpose of the book to do so. However, it is important for children to have a good grounding in writing as a process, so that they have the understanding and experience of the writing process as a base. The genre focus can then be built into the process-oriented, whole-language approach to writing. It is not necessary to throw out the baby, nor any healthy growing child, as the next section will show.

The thrust of the book

There are some people who see a genre-based approach as something quite distinct from and even at odds with the process approach. However, both perspectives offer valuable insights into children's writing development. Even though there are some differences between them, they can complement each other in one integrated approach to the teaching of writing.

One of the things that has been obvious with the process approach in the early years of schooling is the enthusiasm with which children take to writing. They start writing earlier than was usual in other approaches, and they discover what it is to see their own writing down on paper, to have other people read it and to get some response. The writing can become a self-motivating activity which both children and teachers enjoy. We don't want to lose any of that enthusiasm nor the freedom that has made it possible for children to get started on writing.

The process itself is important. Children need to learn what's involved in rehearsal, drafting, revising and proofreading and to have the experience of

publishing and getting reader response. This process should be operating even in contexts where the writers are working with a topic related to a class theme or where they are learning to write in a particular genre. The writing process continues to apply even as the genre is being taught.

But the focus on genre — on the way meanings are organised in the overall structure of texts — is an important aspect of learning to write. This book provides you with many instances of how teachers, who have worked extensively with the process approach, have found it necessary to build on the process and incorporate a focus on the genres of children's writing. They will show you some of the ways in which they have done this and explain the reasons. They have all found that a focus on genre adds a useful dimension to their existing process approach. They are providing their students with ways of writing which will be valuable during their primary years, in the secondary school and in their life beyond school. They are preparing their students for writing for life.

2

John Collerson

WHAT ARE THESE GENRES, ANYWAY?

A genre is a kind of writing. That's not all it is, but it's a good start. It's a funny word *genre*, taken directly from French, so give it a French sort of pronunciation, starting with that smooth *j* sound like the *s* in the middle of *measure*. It's related to other words that mean 'a kind of' like *genus* and even *gender*.

You may be familiar with the use of the term *genre* to refer to the main types of literature — poetry, drama and the novel — and we can still use it in this traditional way. We can also speak of more specific genres like historical novels, science fiction, epic poetry and so on, not to mention genres of film or music. But the way the term *genre* is being used here is more specific than these uses — yet is related to a more general social context.

We can think of a genre as a social process, i.e. as a particular set of activities or a way of doing something. So a court hearing, a church service or a family meal could all be considered as genres. While there are lots of local variations in these, there are also certain fairly predictable elements and an accepted sequence of activities. The reason is that these activities are carried out for some purpose. This is true of any genre; it is a social process which has a purpose — some goal that people are working towards. It also has a recognisable structure or pattern. Finally, a genre is something that arises within a particular culture; it is a product of the culture.

In some genres spoken language is the dominant element. Think of these: a conversation, an interview, a debate, an argument, a speech, a sermon, a joke. Each of these ways of using the spoken language is familiar in our culture and each has its own characteristics, so that we can tell one from the other — well, usually anyway. Sometimes there may be borderline cases (e.g. when a debate becomes an argument) and one genre can become part of another: a joke can be included within a speech. One group of genres which we have all experienced and which depends heavily on speech is the teaching genres — various kinds of lessons and other teaching activities.

Clearly the notion of a genre is not confined to writing, but from now on we will focus on writing and so for practical purposes we can think of a genre as a kind of writing. Moreover, we will be focussing mainly on those written genres likely to be used by primary school children. Of course these are not the only written genres; there are many which are found in other contexts — the business letter, the office memo, the news report, the shopping list and so on — but our focus in this chapter will be on school writing.

The account of genres given here depends very much on the work of Jim Martin and Joan Rothery, who have described the genres of school writing in a number of publications (see *Suggested Reading*, p. 120 below). Theirs is not the only way of describing children's writing, but it is a good starting point because it has been worked out in some detail and is based on extensive studies of the writing that children actually do. This chapter, then, is based on the Martin and Rothery account, but it does include some minor variations and additional points.

The early genres

Some genres are very obvious in the early years of schooling. They are closely linked with children's spoken language, especially with the ways they talk about their own personal experience — something which they are encouraged to do in the junior grades. Some people refer to them as the personal experience genres.

Children's writing experience often starts with the pictures they draw and what is written on them. This may be random letters or words, or hieroglyphics, or something scribed by teacher or parent. But, if the latter, the children will gradually learn to do it for themselves, perhaps relying heavily on the early forms of invented spelling. The writing could be in one of several genres, such as Label, Picture Description, Observation or early Narrative, depending on the purpose. Here is an example of a Label — a simple statement which identifies what is in the picture.

Text 1

This is a spooky house.

Observation/Comment

Much of the early writing that children do is in this genre. It may be associated with a drawing, but it usually has more than one statement (or clause) and thus there is more to it than the simple Label. These statements don't label the picture but provide other kinds of information associated with it. Moreover, children will continue to write in this genre even when there is no picture. The writing can stand on its own.

Here are some examples from a Year 1 class. Jenny had brought her white mouse for the news session, after which the children wrote these texts and drew pictures to go with them. Jenny's text and another read as follows.

Text 2

My mouse is wiat. It has a long tail and a little bit sharp claws and I like it.

Text 3

I like Jenny's mouse. its white and I thick Jenny is nice to the mouse.

In both texts there are several short clauses, each making a statement. Some of them are written as separate sentences and some are joined by *and* but that's not crucial at this stage. What is worth noting is that there are two kinds of statement, Observations and Comments. Take Text 2 for example.

My mouse is wiat. It has a long tail and a little bit sharp claws ..... Observations

and I like it ..... Comment

This combination of Observation and Comment is typical of much writing that children do in the infants grades. Often, as in Text 2, the Comment is the final element, but that is not essential. Text 3 consists mainly of Comments. The main point is that there are recognisable elements which give the genre its structure. But it is a fairly free structure: the Observations and Comments can come in virtually any combination and any order.

It is possible to have Observations alone and so Observation can be considered as a genre by itself. But as we often encourage children to say what they feel about something, the Observation/Comment genre is much more common.

Recount

Another genre which children often use for writing about personal experience is known as the Recount. This example was written by a Year 2 boy.

Text 4 Our Excursion

Yesterday we went to the Police Acadamy on a bus and on the way Jeffrey and I saw lots of aeroplanes. We saw them making horse shoes. We fed the horses too. As we were going back to the school I went to sleep.

The main feature of the Recount is that it presents a series of events in a time sequence. Time is an important organising principle for several kinds of writing and it is in Recounts that children often begin to use it. In this example the writer tells us what happened on the way to the Police Academy, then what they did while there, then what happened on the way home. This sequence gives the text its basic structure. However, there is one other important feature: the opening clause sets the scene for the whole piece.

Yesterday we went to the Police Acadamy on a bus . . .

This feature can be described as the Orientation. The essential feature of the Recount is the series of Events, but the structure often includes an

Orientation, followed by Events. There may even be a Re-orientation at the end. Recounts are usually written in the past tense and the Events are often linked by time words and phrases. The most common device is 'and then'.

Besides the time sequence, some Recounts have another organising principle: the idea of beginning the day by getting out of bed, going out from the home base and doing various things, and then coming home and going back to bed at the end. Donald Graves refers to this kind of text as a 'bed-to-bed'.

Recounts are very common in the writing of primary school children. While they become evident early in most children's writing, they often continue to be used for many years and they have some uses in adult writing — in personal letters for example.

Narrative

Stories are one of the most notable features of human culture and the word *story* is commonly used in our own culture for referring to a wide range of things told in spoken language, written language, pictures, film, drama, dance, music and song. We have tall stories and short stories, good stories and long stories, true stories and cock-and-bull stories, unfinished stories, wildly improbable stories . . . and stories of mystery and imagination. To the journalist a story is everything; the newspapers and news broadcasts are full of them. And at school we tend to use the word *story* for anything that young children write. Part of the point of this book is to show that children can manage several different kinds of writing for different purposes and that if their writing is always described as a 'story', it will be harder for them to learn to appreciate and control the different kinds of writing.

But they do write stories and we can identify them as stories by their structure and purpose. In other words there is a genre which provides the basis for stories (in the strict sense) and this genre is the Narrative. It is not confined to writing, of course, since narratives can exist in speech and in other media as well.

In common with the Recount genre Narrative involves a series of events in a time sequence, and like the Recount it is normally in the past tense. But there is at least one important difference. In a Narrative something goes wrong; there is some complication. In the end the complication is resolved, perhaps happily, perhaps not.

Here is an example of a Narrative by a Year 2 boy.

Text 5 A Boat Story

When my father went to the shop he bought a boat. The boat was beautiful. Then we went in the boat.
Then we went to the sea and we went very deep. I was very scared. My father and I fell in the sea.
My mother and sister were crying because we did not come home.
My mother called the police and the police said 'They are dead'.
They started to cry very much.

We got out of the water and came back home.
Everyone was very happy.

This story has all the basic elements, which can be identified as follows.

When my father went to the shop he bought a boat. The boat was beautiful. Then we went in the boat ..... Orientation

Then we went to the sea and we went very deep. I was very scared. My father and I fell in the sea.
My mother and sister were crying because we did not come home.
My mother called the police and the police said 'They are dead'.
They started to cry very much ..... Complication

We got out of the water and came back home.
Everyone was very happy ..... Resolution

This Narrative has the appropriate structure, though the Resolution is a trifle bald — we are not told how this happy outcome was achieved. We must admit, though, that it is not always easy to bring a story to a satisfactory Resolution and that is why many children settle for an easy formula like waking up from a dream.

The next example is an incomplete Narrative: it was written by a seven-year-old boy.

Text 6 UFO

one night a ufo had a crash in the frunt yard and the aliens came out ov the ship. They sturted shooting at me. And I sturted shooting too.

Here we have an Orientation and a Complication but no Resolution.

There are many variations possible to this basic Orientation-Complication-Resolution structure. Some Narratives, for example, might contain a series of minor Complications and Resolutions leading up to the major Resolution at the end. Some Narratives have additional elements like a comment at the end (called a Coda) or an evaluative comment at some point within the Narrative. Thus we are not suggesting that all Narratives are very simple and straightforward — far from it. But the basic structure is a good starting point for understanding how Narratives are put together.

Teachers who have used this structure in discussing Narratives with their classes have found that the children — even young children — can understand and use the concepts. Some teachers prefer different terms (such as setting, problem, solution) but even those using the longer terms find that children accept them quite readily.

Different types of Narrative

It soon becomes apparent that there are many different kinds of Narrative, such as adventure stories, science fiction, fairy tales and myths. These differ from each other in various ways and some people may be inclined to treat them as separate genres. However, as they all share the basic structure described above, we can treat them all as types of the one genre: Narrative.

Their differences can be described in other ways. Ross Weightman has explored some of these different types with his classes and gives an account of them in Chapter 7.

Narratives such as mystery stories, horror stories, adventure stories and science fiction have much in common, but they tend to differ both in the fields of activity that provide their content (e.g. mystery: criminal investigation, spying, etc; science fiction: space travel, the future, etc.) and in the effects that the writing is intended to have on its readers. All Narratives have the basic purpose of entertainment, but many have other purposes as well, e.g. to create suspense, to puzzle, to frighten, to thrill. Most of these types of Narrative can be written either in the first person or the third person. Indeed, children writing such stories will often write themselves in as the main character and/or narrator.

There is another group of Narrative types which includes fairy tales, fables, moral tales, myths and legends. Besides entertaining, these Narratives may be designed to instruct, to warn, to inform or even to explain. They tend to be written in the third person and they come from fields somewhat removed from everyday life. Fantasy has something in common with these too, though it can also have connections with science fiction and other adventure stories.

Some primary children like to write Narratives which are a kind of send-up or spoof of one of the well-known types. The writer signals in some way that the story is not to be taken too seriously. When children write spoofs it often indicates that they are especially aware of some of the features of the type of Narrative they are sending up. Another type of Narrative is the serial, characterised essentially by its structure, which is organised so as to have a series of Complications and Resolutions, each Resolution leading on to a new episode. Structure is also distinctive for choose-your-own-adventure stories. However, these differ from most other Narratives in several ways. The reader is usually brought into the story by being addressed as *you* and by being offered choices at various points. Thus there are several alternative Narratives depending on how 'you' read.

The factual genres

The genres for presenting factual information form a most important group and they differ from Narrative in several ways. The main ones likely to find a place in the primary curriculum will now be described.

Procedure

We sometimes have to write about a series of actions or events so that there is a record of the steps which someone else — or we ourselves — can follow. Procedures include sets of instructions and directions for finding a place. A recipe is a typical example — that is, the method section, following the list of ingredients. (In other words a Recipe, which is a genre in its own right, incorporates two other genres, the List and the Procedure.) Here is an example from a Year 4 class.

Text 7 Frosty Drink

Serves 2

Ingredients:

½ Glass of Orange Juice.
4 Ice cubes.
1 Scoop of Ice Cream.

Method:

1. *Get a glass and fill the glass up half way with orange juice.*
2. *Get 4 Ice cubes and put them into the glass.*
3. *Put 1 scoop of Ice Cream into the glass.*
4. *Then stir it then you can drink it.*

Remember it's cold!

So the Procedure follows a series of steps. The reader is often addressed as *you*, though this is not essential. The basis of the Procedure is a series of physical actions (*get . . . put . . . stir . . .*).

Report

This genre provides a way of describing what some aspect of the world is like. But it is not merely a description: it also involves classification — relating the topic to a broader category. Here is an example written by a Year 4 girl.

Text 8 Koalas

Koalas are a tree marsupial. Koala means 'No drink' given by the aborigines. Koalas feed at night. Koalas feed on gum leaves. Because gum leaves are juicy they don't have to drink water. Out of the variety of gum leaves they only eat about twelve kinds including Blue gum, Grey gum and Manna gum. Some koalas can live to twenty years of age. When the koala is just born it looks like a fat worm. Lots of people think that koalas are harmless animals but they can bite and scratch. People call the koala a bear but it isn't. Koalas spend most of their time in a tree and rarely come to the ground. Female koalas have one baby each season.

The main structural feature of the Report is that it begins with a General Classification — in this case, 'Koalas are a tree marsupial.' This relates the subject of the Report to some wider organisation of knowledge. What follows is the Description — a series of descriptive statements which may be organised in various ways, but, unlike Recount and Narrative, not usually on the basis of time. A Report is normally written in the simple present tense and makes general statements, sometimes with the singular generic ('the koala') and sometimes with the plural ('koalas'). Like many primary school children, the writer of Text 8 switches from plural to singular generic and back again. The main point is that it is not about any particular koala but koalas in general.

While Description is one component in the structure of a Report, there are occasions when a Description may be written as a separate genre in its own

Children working together in a small group to draft part of a class Report on kangaroos (see p. 54).

right. Dallas Tonkin mentions these in Chapter 8, as well as dealing with other factual genres. Description can also be a component in other genres, such as Narrative.

The term *report* is one of those words which, like *story*, is used in the community for a wide range of written documents. Even in schools some people may typically use the term for texts somewhat different from the example given above. In Chapter 10 Bill Crowley offers a broader view of the Report genre.

Explanation

This is a factual text which gives reasons. It provides an account of how something comes about or why things are as they are. In providing reasons it goes beyond the Report. Here is an example from a Year 6 student.

Text 9 How do animals survive?

Many animals that were once alive are now extinct. Some extinct animals are the dodo and the moa bird. Other animals like whales, koalas and buffalo nearly died out but man has tried to save them. For animals to survive nature and their enemies they need protection. Some types of protection they have are:

1. *hard shells*
2. *teeth*
3. *spikes*
4. *claws*
5. *tusks*
6. *fur.*

The essential part of the Explanation comes in the fourth sentence: 'For animals to survive nature and their enemies they need protection.' The explanation is then made more specific by means of a List, which is a genre in itself, though here incorporated in a larger text.

In general usage the word *explanation* sometimes refers to a procedure, to an 'explanation' of how to do something — the steps in a process. However, because this is rather different from an explanation of why something comes about, we will mark the distinction by using the term Procedure for the one and reserving Explanation for the other.

Exposition

This contains an argument which puts forward a case for something, recognising that there are other positions. The essence of the Exposition is the Thesis, or statement of the position which is being argued.

Below is an example of expository writing by one of Dallas Tonkin's Year 5 students (see Chapter 8). The children were asked to write an answer to the question: 'Should children in special units be integrated into everyday classes?' This issue had previously been discussed orally.

Text 10

No, I do not think children in special units should be integrated because they need special services and their teachers have been specially trained and they wouldn't let their training go to waste. They would also need the teacher more than ourselves. It would be very hard to cope without having our teacher. At times we would have to help without getting on with our own work.

Note that the terms *exposition* and *expository* are sometimes applied to factual writing in general — but that could be confusing. It seems better to use the term *factual* for this group in general and to keep Exposition for the more specific type.

And there's more!

I've now outlined the main genres of writing likely to be found in primary school writing, according to the account given by Martin and Rothery. There are other kinds of writing — broader than the specific genres — which I'll mention briefly because they all have a degree of importance. They are all kinds of writing which we need to include in a primary writing program — many teachers do already.

Besides the factual genres already mentioned there are genres associated with 'study skills' — such as lists, notes, outlines and summaries. There is also writing associated with visual representations: labelled diagrams, captions, and so on. Text 9, we remember, includes a list within another genre. But beyond these minor genres there are some kinds of writing which can play quite a significant part in primary children's writing experience.

Letter One kind of writing which has obvious uses in the wider world is the letter. Many teachers introduce their students to letter writing and

provide all sorts of opportunities for the letters to have real readers. Yet we sometimes hear outsiders lament that 'children are not taught to write letters anymore'. At least PETA has helped the cause with Pat Edwards' book *P.S. Write Soon!* (Sydney: Australia Post and PETA, 1986).

There are several kinds of letters with different purposes; the genre differs according to the purpose. A personal letter usually includes something of the Recount as well as bits of what you could call 'written conversation'. A business letter is usually rather different (for example, a request for goods or services or a complaint). Then there are thank-you letters, letters to the editor (which may include Explanation or even Exposition) and so on. Thus letters may involve different genres depending on their purpose.

Nevertheless the letter can be treated as a distinct kind of writing. We can teach children how to handle the formal aspects of letters and we can give them experience of writing some different kinds of letters — not as isolated exercises but when opportunities arise in the context of our teaching program.

Poem This is one of the traditional literary genres, though in the way the word *genre* is being used here we must say that poems could involve different genres — for example, Narrative, Description, or even Explanation. Poems are seen as different from other kinds of writing partly in terms of their form and partly in terms of something extra — not easily reduced to a short definition. Perhaps we could just say that in poems we use language in special ways that go beyond most everyday uses.

Some teachers encourage children to write poems. This is fine as long as the children have heard and read lots of poems so that they have plenty of good models (not just doggerel verse, crudely rhymed). And it is not enough to have children trying to write just a few types of poems which have a distinct form (haiku, cinquain, limerick — or even sonnet). Children should be introduced to a much wider range of poetry than these rather specific forms.

Playscript This is a form of writing which children will almost certainly have the opportunity of reading and which they are often encouraged to write. Playscripts (including TV and film scripts) contrast with dialogue in ordinary prose in the way they show who is speaking and what they are saying and in the stage (or camera) directions. It is good for children to explore these differences and to consider the purposes for which scripts are used in the modern world. If they are writing scripts they should also perform them — at least as acted readings. The film making which Lee Pledger describes (pp. 43-44 below) illustrates one of the possibilities for this type of writing.

Other kinds of writing There are of course many other kinds of writing and some not already mentioned will be relevant to the primary school curriculum. Posters, advertisements, newspaper reports and other mass media genres might well have a place in media study. But we need to be careful about how many genres we are introducing. We sometimes see long

lists of different kinds of writing for teachers to use with children. However, the genres we are going to introduce to our pupils should be carefully selected, and we should ensure that the purpose for each genre is clear from the context in which it is introduced.

Summary

Many genres arise naturally in everyday life. In the school context, there are several genres which are not necessarily just 'picked up' but which are needed for further education and adult life. Children need to gain control of these genres if they are to have the range of choice needed to operate in the school context and beyond.

3

Jennifer Hammond

READ ME YOUR STORY...

When is a story not a story? In this chapter Jennifer Hammond provides further explanation of the differences between Narrative and Report — both very important genres in the primary school. She discusses two particular examples from a Year 3 class and then goes on to explain the contexts from which the two pieces of writing arose. This helps to make clear that genres are not just forms of writing to be foisted on our students in an arbitrary way. They arise from particular contexts and the purposes that those contexts provide for the writer.

The title of this chapter comes from some segments of a video on the teaching of writing that I watched recently (*Left to Write*, 1986). In many ways it was an excellent video but it revealed a problem that I believe occurs in many writing classrooms. In the video the term *story* was used to refer to every text that the children produced. These texts included:

> *The plant is dying.*
>
> *We flew back to the UFO using the small turbo booster built into our belts. We landed in the docking bay of the UFO.*
>
> *My brother smashed on the wall and he flied up onto the air. It was terrible. He landed on the grass.*

The children who wrote these texts were attempting to do quite different things. The first child was providing factual information about a plant, the second was writing an imaginative narrative, while the third was recounting an experience involving his brother. The use of the term *story* failed to recognise the different purposes for which the children were writing. My intention in this chapter is to show why it is important for teachers to understand that there are different kinds of writing, and why it is important to take these into account in planning programs that will help students to learn to write effectively for different purposes. Such purposes arise out of

the curriculum areas that students study and may include recording information, arguing a point of view and so on. The way in which the purpose is realised in a text will be partly shaped by the audience for whom the text is intended.

How purpose shapes a written text

Writing is more than just getting down ideas. Depending on the writer's purpose, the text will have a particular shape and the language will be organised in a particular way to give the text its meaning. Let me illustrate precisely how this happens by discussing two texts written by a Year 3 student whose work I have been observing.

Text 1 The Dreadful Accident

On Saturday me and my cousins went to the pool. They were in the baby pool and I was in the big pool. I then asked my Aunty could I please have my goggles. She through them on the cement. I put my arm on the gutter and reached out with my other arm. Then my arm slipped into the gutter then it was stuck. I said my arm was stuck but no one would Belive me so I said it again, My arm is stuck so I saw a lady came over and helped me get it out. But it would not come out. So the lady Jumped in to the pool and got it out. then I went to sit down in the shade with my mum and Dad. My Dad kept on saying that he would have got a hamer to get it out if he had to. Then we went to my cousins house then we had a drink and went home. We got home at eight o'clock.

The purpose of this text is to tell about something dramatic that happened to the writer, to tell about what went wrong and thus to 'entertain' the reader. It is a Narrative. It is similar in purpose to many oral narratives that typically begin 'Guess what happened to me today.' In such oral narratives the speaker then goes on to tell about an unusual or dramatic event.

In order to achieve its purpose, Text 1 goes through several stages.

On Saturday me and my cousins went to the pool. They were in the baby pool and I was in the big pool .....Orientation

I then asked my Aunty could I please have my goggles. She through them on the cement. I put my arm on the gutter and reached out with my other arm. Then my arm slipped into the gutter then it was stuck. I said my arm was stuck but no one would Belive me so I said it again, My arm is stuck .....Complication

so I saw a lady came over and helped me get it out. But it would not come out. So the lady Jumped in to the pool and got it out...Resolution

then I went to sit down in the shade with my mum and Dad. My Dad kept on saying that he would have got a hamer to get it out if he had to .....Coda

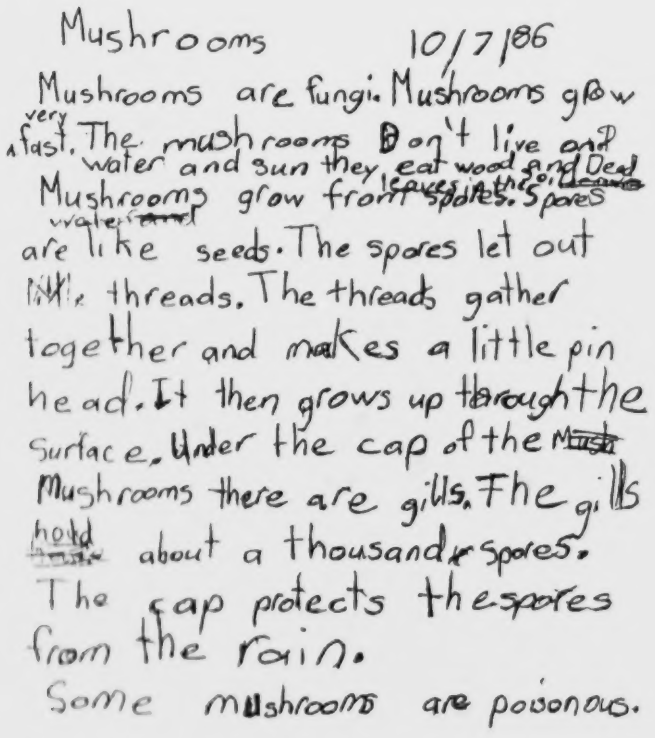
Then we went to my cousins house then we had a drink and went home. We got home at eight o'clock .....Reorientation

The text begins with an Orientation which sets the scene — it provides details of time and place and introduces the participants involved in the action. The Complication gives details of what went wrong — it provides the point of the story. The Resolution explains how the Complication was resolved.

The essential structure of the Narrative is Orientation — Complication — Resolution, but in this text the writer has added some details to the end of her Narrative, which can be called a Coda. The Coda provides a sort of comment on the events described in the Narrative. It is an optional addition to the Narrative. The last section, which I have labelled Reorientation, is extraneous to the dreadful accident and may indicate that the writer, not sure where to end her text, has run on to a typical Recount ending.

Other distinctive features of the Narrative include the use of specific reference and past tense. This Narrative relates the sequence of events around a problem experienced by the narrator. It involves specific events and specific people. Hence reference is specific, e.g. *me and my cousins, they, I, my arm, a lady*, etc. Because the Narrative relates events that occurred in the past it uses past tenses: for example, *went, were, threw, slipped*, etc.

Text 2


Mushrooms 10/7/86

Mushrooms are fungi. Mushrooms grow very fast. The mushrooms don't live on water and sun they eat wood and Dead leaves in the soil. Mushrooms grow from spores. Spores are like seeds. The spores let out little threads. The threads gather together and makes a little pin head. It then grows up through the surface. Under the cap of the Mushrooms there are gills. The gills hold about a thousand spores. The cap protects the spores from the rain.

Some mushrooms are poisonous.

Text 2, 'Mushrooms', is a Report. It is quite different from a Narrative in its purpose, and so it is structured differently and uses language differently. Its purpose is to provide information about a particular topic, that is, about one aspect of the way the world is. The stages of the text are as follows.

Mushrooms are fungi .....General Classification

Mushrooms grow very fast. The mushrooms Don't live on water and sun they eat wood and Dead leaves in the soil. Mushrooms grow from spores. Spores are like seeds. The spores let out threads. The threads gather together and makes a little pin head. It then grows up through the surface. Under the cap of the mushrooms there are gills. The gills hold about a thousand spores. The cap protects the spores from the rain. Some mushrooms are poisonous .....Description

Reports begin with a General Classification, or general statement about the topic under discussion. This is followed by a Description where more detailed information on the topic is provided. In this text the last sentence *Some mushrooms are poisonous* could have been put at the beginning, as it is a classifying statement. It is an indication that the author is still developing as a writer, and specifically that she is still in the process of learning how to write Reports. Nevertheless her Report has a recognisable structure of General Classification followed by Description. Clearly this text is organised differently from the Narrative.

The broad purpose of Reports is to provide information about the way things are in the world. So it is appropriate here to write about mushrooms in general, rather than any specific mushroom. The same applies to gills, spores, threads, etc. The writer's use of *the mushrooms* indicates some confusion about use of appropriate reference, which I think is again an indication that she is a relatively immature writer. However, it is clear throughout the text that she is referring to the whole class of mushrooms, rather than one specific mushroom. The appropriate tense to use in English when providing this kind of general information is the simple present, and hence the writer uses *are, grow, live, eat, gather,* etc.

The two texts described above are examples of different genres. They have different purposes and in order to achieve these, the writer goes through different stages. For Narratives these are Orientation, Complication and Resolution; for Reports they are General Classification followed by Description. The stages of a genre are referred to as its schematic structure. Thus each of these texts has a different schematic structure. There are also specific linguistic features that differ according to the genre.

The notion of genre is important because it provides us with a way of explicitly understanding how purpose shapes a text. Depending on the purpose of a text, it will have a particular shape or schematic structure, and it will have specific linguistic features that we can identify and describe. The schematic structure and linguistic features are not accidental and they are not arbitrary. They are functional. It is through the schematic structure and the linguistic features that we make meaning. If we change the structure and the linguistic features, then we have changed the meaning of the text.

The relationship between text and context

A recognition of the functional nature of genres implies that they cannot be interpreted as some kind of formula to be handed down like a set of commandments. Rather, an understanding of how to write effectively for a particular purpose must emerge from the context in which that purpose is relevant. This link between context and text is central to an understanding of genres. It means, for example, that in different curriculum areas one genre rather than others will arise naturally from work done in class. I will try to explain this more clearly by referring back to the two texts already discussed.

The 'Mushrooms' Report arose out of a series of science lessons. The children had spent some weeks working on mushrooms. During this time they had discussed what mushrooms look like, their different parts, and how they grow. They had observed and documented the growth of mushrooms in a box in the classroom. They had read a lot about mushrooms from the numerous books available to them in the classroom. In all, the children had a lot of information about mushrooms.

When it came to collecting information together in order to write about mushrooms, the written genre that emerged very naturally from this context was that of Report. The term 'Report' was part of the classroom vocabulary for talking about language gradually built up during the year. Thus when the teacher suggested that the children write a Report on mushrooms, they knew what she was referring to. The children were further assisted by the fact that as a whole class they jointly constructed a model Report which the teacher wrote on the board. Construction of this model text involved discussion of the appropriate structure: for example, the need to begin with a general statement on mushrooms, followed by other information suitably organised. Thus not only did the children have the information about mushrooms that they needed, but they also had a model of what a successful Report of this information looked like.

The teacher's knowledge and awareness of the appropriate genre enabled her to guide the children in the construction of their own Reports. Later, when the children had written their own draft Reports, the teacher, in individual conferences, was able to offer very constructive comment on the positive features of the texts and on areas where they could be improved. She was able to make suggestions in terms of the structure and organisation of the texts, how to make certain parts more explicit and so on. The result was that the children, who covered a range of ability levels, all produced successful scientific Reports of which they were proud.

The other text discussed earlier in this chapter, 'The Dreadful Accident', was a topic chosen by the child and the context in which it was produced was that of the regular language session. This Narrative was based on the child's personal experience, but it is clear that she was aware of the structure and linguistic features of Narratives. Much of this awareness had come from exposure to Narrative literature. Each language session in this class began with the teacher reading to the children from either factual or narrative materials. Besides being implicitly taught by exposure to many Narratives,

Sharing a language for talking about the text makes for effective conferences.

the children had become more explicitly aware of features of Narratives through ongoing class discussions of their structure and organisation, through reference to what the children were reading and through reference to their own written Narratives. In particular quite a lot of work was done on assisting children to 'resolve' the Complications they set up in their Narratives. A number of children wrote texts with very successful Orientations and highly imaginative Complications, but then found they were unable to extract their characters from these Complications. Class discussions of the need for satisfactory Resolutions, as well as discussion of some possible Resolutions in specific texts, helped deal with this problem.

The point I have been stressing is that successful writing at school emerges from the context of what is going on in the classroom. An understanding of genres enables the teacher to be aware of precisely what she or he is teaching, and to successfully guide the children in their reading and their construction of written texts which emerge from these contexts.

This explicit knowledge and the language that arises from this knowledge give the teacher a much greater insight into different purposes for writing, and the shape of texts written for different purposes, than the term *story* allows. They not only enable teachers to ensure that children know where they are heading when they set about writing a text, but they also give them insights into why a text is successful or unsuccessful. Hence the teacher,

when assisting a particular child, can offer quite detailed and explicit suggestions. If these suggestions are phrased in language which is part of ongoing class discussions about different sorts of written texts, they are highly constructive and enable children to see the strengths and weaknesses of their own writing. Suggestions that refer to purpose, structure, organisation of text, degree of explicitness in regard to participants, sequence of events, etc, are much more useful than reference to the need for 'clarifying ideas', making sense and adding more information, which are the kind of comments often made to children about their writing.

Some ways of integrating these insights into the whole language classroom are described in Chapter 9, written by Lorraine Rowles and myself.

4

Helen Woodward

LET ME DEMONSTRATE

Some people may have got the impression that the process approach to writing does not involve teaching. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yet there are many modes of teaching. It is not just standing out at the front and explaining something. In the course of a process writing workshop we should employ many teaching modes. Some will involve demonstration. In this chapter Helen Woodward shows how she came to learn the value of demonstration in the teaching of writing and how she recently worked with a Year 6 teacher to help children write in a particular genre.

This is the first of several accounts in this book of how teachers came to draw on the notion of genre in their process approach to writing. Later, in Chapter 9, Lorraine Rowles shows how some of these insights can be worked into a typical whole-language, literature-based reading/writing program.

Children are learning every waking moment of the day. The child-centred approach of the whole language classroom is based on the capacity children have for learning. But does this mean that the teacher takes a back seat in these classrooms? Does individualised learning mean that there is no teacher input? Do children simply learn by osmosis; or does learning drop 'as the gentle rain from heaven upon the child beneath'? Many teachers have withdrawn from chalk-and-talk, teacher-centred instruction and have become involved in integrated child-centred learning, and this is marvellous. But do children learn if they are left completely to their own devices? The answer is of course that they are continually learning. They even learn things we don't intend to teach them. They learn incidentally. But how can we go about directing them to learn particular things?

Let us look first at how they learn incidentally. How did they learn to eat? How did they learn to talk? How did they learn how their parents felt about the family next door? How did they learn how you felt the day you came to school with the flu? They learned all these things primarily by

demonstration. Such demonstrations are 'the raw material of learning' according to Brian Cambourne, and demonstration is one of the conditions of learning. In order for it to be truly effective, however, children must engage with the demonstrations and the other conditions must also be met: immersion, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation and response (see Butler & Turbill 1984, pp. 6-9). Now, if children's incidental learning depends on demonstration, they can also learn specific things through demonstrations that we plan for them.

The planned demonstration

What I am calling demonstration also goes by other names (such as modelling and mini-lessons) but I prefer *demonstration* because it indicates that there is an action taking place — something that can be seen. As Smith (1981) puts it: 'The first essential component of learning is the opportunity to see how something is done.' Seeing this something done is the result of demonstration. But engagement is also essential: Smith says that 'learning occurs when the learner engages with the demonstration'.

Children will engage with demonstrations when they can see that:

1 The demonstration has a purpose. It must meet a need. The children must be able to see this purpose.

2 The demonstration is 'do-able'. The child has to be able to realise 'Hey I can do that', or 'I could have a go at that'. The underlying principle is that children feel so secure and comfortable in the classroom that they are willing to attempt the ideas you demonstrate without fear of reprimand if they fail.

3 The demonstration is authentic. We are sometimes inclined to fabricate circumstances in order to get a point across. Children can see straight through this ploy and while it cannot be completely avoided, we must always, whenever possible, use valid and authentic demonstration.

We can often use the children and their writing to demonstrate a point: for example, how to work out the spelling of the words they want to use. It never occurred to me that some children may not know where to start writing a word and wonder how to go about organising the letters, until a particular child brought it to my attention. In one class I had a little Italian girl who was experiencing difficulty with English because of her non-English-speaking background. She would write a collection of letters — usually pages of them — and tell me a story that corresponded approximately with the collection of letters. Then one day I realised that she was capable of reading a simple text and yet her writing didn't display this knowledge.

'Suzanna,' I said to her, 'can you show me some words in this book you've just read to me?'

'Yes,' she said, pointing to various words.

'Well, how about using some of the words you know in your writing?' I suggested.

'Oh? How do you do that?' she asked.

I asked Nick, one of the more competent children, to show her how to go about organising the necessary letters so that she could work out the words she wanted to use in her writing. 'Oh,' said Suzanna, 'is that what you mean? I can do that. I didn't know that's what you meant.'

The next day I asked Nick to come and show everyone how he worked out his words and inquired if anyone else had any other way of working them out. From there on Suzanna was writing comprehensive pieces of work and never reverted to the collection of letters. Up to that point I hadn't demonstrated the required process. I had wrongly assumed that everyone knew what I meant when I said to try and work it out.

The classroom process

The writing that children do in class can be used to provide authentic demonstrations of editing and conferencing strategies, as well as many ideas about content and structure. The demonstration must be an interactive, visual procedure of very short duration — a maximum of five minutes. Many demonstrations are spontaneous but room must be made for the planned demonstration too. How do you manage that, you might ask?

Some people are inclined to think that process writing time is unstructured. Let me impress on you that the process writing time is a very structured lesson with a definite pattern. The pattern I use is as follows:

TEACHER ACTIVITY		CHILD ACTIVITY
Demonstration	(5 mins)	
Roving conference	(3 mins)	Children prepare to write
Teacher writes	(5 mins)	Children write
Individual conference	(10 mins)	
Small group conferences when needed	(5 mins)	
Roving conference to ensure children are on task	(2 mins)	
Sharing (5 mins)		

Process meets genre

If demonstration can play such an important part in the process writing classroom, then the notion of genre is easily accommodated. Children will see it as relevant to their needs and interests provided that Cambourne's other conditions of learning are also observed. (I am emphasising demonstration because of the tendency to rely on spontaneous instances rather than planning our demonstrations.)

'How about taking that bit down to the bottom?'

When I first became a teacher I worked in a very teacher-centred way, but as I found out about the process approach I slowly began to 'let go' my rigid routines and to allow for a much higher student input. Yet I realised that there were times when I needed to show children specific ideas. At first I found it hard to reconcile this with the idea of individualised student-centred learning. It was Brian Cambourne who helped me to see that I could take a more prominent role as teacher without taking away from students the responsibility for their own learning.

To focus on the genres of children's writing is quite consistent with the role I have already described of giving planned demonstrations. However, I did not reach this point in my thinking until after taking up my present lecturing position. Since I wanted to test these ideas in the classroom I had to go back into a school. Claymore Public School at Campbelltown opened its doors to me and so I went to work putting my demonstration theory into practice.

Each day I was at the school with the Year 5/6 children I followed the process writing structure outlined above. As my visits were limited to one per week my input was somewhat fragmented, but with the help of Ken Boyd, the class teacher, I worked through the following program of demonstrations.

My purpose was to demonstrate the notion of Report writing to these children. Listed overleaf are the demonstrations we used. Had I been in a regular classroom situation I would have done these demonstrations on consecutive days.

Demonstration 1 We examined factual writing in printed books. We looked at headings, sub-headings, illustrations, diagrams, general layout and basic content. Books were shared, one between two.

Demonstration 2 We choose a book about dogs and looked through it. Again we noted the headings, content, etc.

Demonstration 3 We brainstormed facts about dogs. I wrote all the facts the children could offer about dogs on the board.

Demonstration 4 We categorised these ideas into facts about:

how dogs help us
how dogs move
what dogs do.

Demonstration 5 These categorised facts were written onto separate sheets of paper and distributed, one sheet to each of three groups. These groups were organised voluntarily on the basis of 'Which facts would you like to write about?' Then the class worked as a whole with the teacher to develop a sample sentence using some of the facts to show how they could be combined. Time was given during the day for the children to write their paragraphs in groups using the facts on their sheets.

Demonstration 6 Each group read their paragraph to the rest of the class. We decided which order to put them in and then we worked on an initial generalisation and a concluding sentence and added them to the text.

At this stage we had a class Report about dogs. One problem that emerged was that I had assumed every child had a basic knowledge of dogs. I now realised that further research could have been beneficial, but the purpose of these demonstrations was to show the children one way of organising factual material.

Demonstration 7 We discussed the idea of note taking. The children had had some practice in this skill as they had been taking notes from current affairs programs on television. As every child had access to an animal for observation, we decided that each should take notes on the movements and habits of the observed animal. However, note taking from a television program and observational note taking are two different skills, and demonstration of observational note taking should have been included. (There are many ways to do this. The children could have been taken into the playground to sit quietly and observe any bird life, or any class or school pet could have been observed in the classroom. Detailed notes of movements, etc. would then be written down as they were observed.)

Demonstration 8 Some children read their observations and others asked questions. The purpose here was for the children to gain ideas from each other and to consolidate their own facts.

It was expected that the children would then take this data they had collected and use it in some way during writing time. Two examples of what was produced are included below, showing how the children used the Report

format we had worked with. Subheadings were optional but they all chose to use them; Craig even used subheadings for his introduction and conclusion.

Because Kate was writing about her pet cat, she introduced a more specific and personal aspect in her writing than is normally accepted in the Report genre.

My Cat

Description
There are many types of cats. This cat is only one example. This cat is mine. My cat's name is Puss. He has black and white fur. Puss is very fat. Usually if you see him he is asleep. Puss's eyes are green. He doesn't have any special markings.

What My Cat Does during a Normal Day
In the morning he wakes up and meows until you give him milk. Then he goes back to sleep for the rest of the day. Then as night comes he prowls around and kills birds. Then he goes back to sleep.

What My Cat Dislikes
My cat does not like my dog and always hisses at him. He also hates loud noises like those made by motorbikes, mowers, cranes and tractors.

An Accident My Cat Had
When my cat was young he was hit by a car. This is how my family and cat came together. Before my cat was a stray. We took him to the vet and the vet told us he had a broken jaw. He had surgery and everything was fixed up.

A dog is said to be a man's best friend but I think cats are too.

On the other hand Craig wrote about canaries in general.

Canaries

Introduction
There are many types of canaries and they are very interesting.

What They Dislike
Many canaries dislike cold and rainy weather because when they're left out in the cold they go into shock.

Sounds They Make
All male canaries whistle but no female canaries do. Some canaries roll their whistle and some make theirs sharp. When one canary is separated from another they whistle until it annoys the people so they will put them back together.

When They Breed
When canaries breed they go up into the corner of the aviary so no other bird can disturb them.

Looking After Them
When you look after them, you have to change their food and water every day and also you have to clean their cage every day. If you want to train them it will take a long time because they are hard to train.

Conclusion
When you wake up in the morning they start to whistle and you can have hours of enjoyment listening to them whistle.

These examples are at second-draft stage and, as you can see, they still need some editing in the finer details. However, from these first attempts at Report writing we can see the beginnings of a concept of the Report genre that can be developed further as time goes on.

Some of you may be thinking at this stage, 'This is not writing: this is science', and in a sense you'd be correct. But the fact is that curriculum areas cannot be rigidly separated and writing is something to be used across the curriculum for many purposes. One of the most effective ways in which we enable our students to use writing is through the power of demonstration. Through specific demonstration we give our students access to learning.

5

Lee Pledger

WRITING IN A FAMILY GROUP CLASS

In the next group of chapters, four teachers explain how they came to incorporate a focus on the genres into their teaching of children's writing. These teachers are all experienced with the process approach and they continue to use its main features. The chapters by Lee Pledger and Dallas Tonkin describe their teaching of several genres, and these two chapters serve to provide further examples of a range of genres and the contexts from which they arose. The chapters by Elizabeth O'Connell and Ross Weightman are much more specific in their focus; they are each concerned with just one genre.

Lee Pledger teaches a 'family group' (or vertically grouped) class at North Sydney Dem School, in which she has children from Years 3, 4 and 5. In 1985 she worked with Joan Rothery and Jim Martin in exploring the teaching of various genres in her class. In this way she was able to combine her own considerable experience with the insights that were coming from Martin and Rothery's work. While it is true that a number of genres were tried over a period of about six months, it is clear that they were tied in with various class projects and themes to which they were relevant.

Various types of writing form part of our culture, and some types of writing, on a given occasion, are more useful or appropriate than others. Therefore some of the language program needs to be concerned with exposing children to a variety of writing experiences and with helping them to create a variety of texts — provided that these texts are within the range of tasks suitable to the children's stages of development and the class program.

If we make provision for this variety we are ensuring that the children we teach will not be disadvantaged in a world where confident and appropriate use of language gives power and more opportunity to control one's life. Nonetheless the process the children go through *when* they write must be

child-centred. Over-direction at any stage takes away ownership. Thus the teacher's role is that of a consultant who offers help by asking questions and making suggestions. He/she encourages the children to be independent and to make the final decisions about their writing.

Prelude

Most of this chapter will be concerned with the writing done in my class during the first half of one year. At the beginning of the year, to involve the children in writing, I had them focus on their interests and personal experiences. We talked as a class and in small groups about hobbies, pets and favourite places. Generally the children talked easily about these things that had personal significance, and later class books made up from the writing which followed were sought after by the children as reading material.

Since the children were selecting their own genre and their own topic, a number of them wrote Narratives and some chose to write Reports. The remaining texts were Observation/Comments, and there were a few Recounts. (Martin and Rothery make the point that some children, left to their own devices and without teacher intervention, would continue to write only Narratives and Reports throughout primary school.)

As you might expect in a vertically grouped class, the range in the standard of writing was great. Anna (Year 5) wrote a long and effective Narrative, the Orientation foreshadowing the Complication to come. Simon (Year 3) wrote with difficulty four simple sentences. David, who had been in a support class for mildly intellectually handicapped children for the previous two years, wrote:

> *My bike is my favourite thing. I got it on my birthday. It goes like the wind. It's not the bike I quite wanted but it's O.K. I really wanted a red one.*

During the week or two which followed this first attempt at writing, the children worked on other topics selected by them. The hesitant children began to write with more confidence, and at greater length. Simon wrote:

> *One day my mother said, 'Boys! I've got something exciting to tell you.' My brother and me looked at each other. 'What . . . what?' My mother looked at us, and she said, 'One day I got this funny feeling.' I said, 'Yeh?' Then she said, 'Your father took a blood test and he said I was pregnant.' 'We don't believe it,' me and Joey said. 'Are you sure, Mummy?' 'Yes, I'm positive.' 'Yahoo!' I said. That was October 11th. Now it's March 2. All in between those months my mother has been doing exercises. Mummy had her baby on February 26th, and we named him Willy!!!*

The older, more experienced writers tackled subjects ranging from 'The City to Surf' (a long distance running event) to 'A Special Animal', which was the story of Mozart's cat. On the whole, however, the children who had chosen to write their first text in the Narrative genre selected Narrative

again, while Report writers stayed with Reports. There continued to be a few Recounts and Observation/Comments. So, to help the children gain control of a wider range of genres, we decided to introduce some in a specific way.

Introducing a new genre

The stages that the children and I went through in working on a new genre provide a framework for the production of text — for the process of writing. Here is a summary of these stages.

1 Models of the genre are provided by the teacher.
2 These models can be discussed in class (part of the discussion should focus on their components and goals).
3 A class text may be built up through interaction amongst teacher and children.
4 Children choose their topics.
5 Research — especially for factual writing.
6 Draft writing.
7 Conferencing, with some discussion of the goals and components of the text.
8 Editing.
9 Publication of final version.

These stages remain constant, but the experiences the teacher plans to help the children through the stages are a matter of personal choice, and are dictated by the children's interests and needs. The approach is more goal-directed than an entirely process approach would be: for example, some of the questions and discussions during pre-writing and conferencing point to stages in the text. Product is emphasised as well as process.

In the remainder of the chapter I will give an account of how some particular genres were introduced. The examples of writing I have chosen represent a range of ability across the three Years. The writing is, in the main, 'first draft' which has been conferenced once to tidy surface features and remedy any glaring deficiencies in the organisation of the texts.

Narrative

The previous year we had completed a unit of work on fairy tales, myths and legends during which we had informally discussed the structure used by writers of Narrative prose, and so the older children already knew about Narratives. The new, younger members of the class had little difficulty in understanding the genre.

Some of the stories I read to the children during the week or so we were focussing on Narrative were *Hansel and Gretel*, *Prince Bertram the Bad*, *Mr Miacca* and *The Painted Bird*. I had the children retell some of these stories by playing a 'game' in which one child begins the story, then points to a friend who continues it, and so on.

At another session we made up a class Narrative which I wrote up on large sheets of paper as the children gave their ideas. After running out of space with the story barely into the Complication, I reverted to the 'game' — the children contributing original material — using a cassette player to record it. This lessened the children's frustration at having to wait too long for a turn.

When the children were planning their own Narratives, I suggested that they draw a series of pictures which introduced the place and the characters, and which showed the Complication in the story and its Resolution. Before they did any writing, I asked them to work in pairs and 'narrate' to each other. The listener's task was to be supportive, to ask questions when the plot was not clear, and to make suggestions if appropriate. When the children were writing, I found it useful to suggest that they describe the setting of the story as if they were painting a picture with words.

Everyone handled the genre successfully, although there was room for development. William's story was short and simple but an example of a perfectly formed Narrative.

Lazy John

Once upon a time, in a little town called Pelevon, a fishing village in the U.S.A., there lived a little boy called John. John was very, very lazy. He wouldn't even have his sailing lessons. One day all the boys in the village had a boat race. In the race the other boys stayed near the shore because they knew there was a storm coming up. But John didn't know about the storm so he went right out. The storm came up and the other boys could go back to the shore, but John was too far out. Waves were drowning John's boat. Suddenly a current caught his boat and took him to the side of the river. John was safe. After that John was never lazy again.

Peter (Year 4) wrote a compelling Orientation.

An Incident in the Year 4000

A Radar Tracking Station in the super-modern city of New York was humming as usual, when, at maximum range, it started to emit erratic beeping. At first they thought that it might be a space shuttle from a foreign power spying on them. They were confused and surprised however, when analysis proved that it was floating!

Just then a high-intensity beam that could only belong to a badly damaged plasma drive system flashed through space, to strike a nuclear power-plant in the Mexican desert.

As the crash-boom rang out, the object came into view on the screens. It was a minature space city!! But there was something else to be noted. The height monitor showed that the UFO was halting at 40,000 feet! . . .

What followed might be best described as an overdose of a TV science fiction series like *Dr Who*. The Complication was far too complex and thus difficult to resolve. Several of the Narratives came into this category.

In an effort to have the children come to grips with the structure of their writing, I reminded them of how, the previous year, we had learned how Alan Garner develops his stories. The children had been reading his books,

in particular *The Stone Book*, *The Aimer Gate* and *Tom Fobble's Day*, and I had shown them a film made by the BBC in which he talks about where he grew up, the people he has known, the experiences he has had, and how he has drawn on these in order to write. We explained the film and its implications to the younger children in the class, and then we had an interesting few days digging into the past for likely experiences.

When the children tried their next Narrative, some drew heavily on personal experience, just changing the names of the people and the places involved. Others used only the germ of an idea around which they created something entirely new. Emily (Year 5) combined personal experience and literature (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) in 'The Escape Tunnel'.

> *'Now Debbie and Nillan, how many times have I told you we can't afford to go to the snow, let alone hire skis,' said Mrs. Robinson, Debbie, Nillan and Wendy's Mum. It was a sunny day, and Debbie thought it would have been lovely to take the weather with them and go to the snow where they could sit on the fluffy foam and go whizzing off nowhere, anywhere in fact. 'Oh stop that,' thought Debbie to herself, 'you know you'll never be able to afford it.'*
>
> *Debbie went to her room and started to cry. She got very mad, she knocked over her half-painted desk, and pushed over her cupboard, which had hardly anything in it. Suddenly she stopped, she was being so immature about the whole thing. 'Calm down Debbie,' she said to herself. Debbie regained her breath and started very slowly pushing the cupboard back up. CRASH, Debbie's hand went right through the cupboard. It was very cold inside, she could feel her hand freezing.*
>
> *'Ow, I wonder what's in there.' Debbie pushed the cupboard up very carefully so as not to crash through it again, and went inside. 'Ooooo, it is cold,' thought Debbie. Then, as if Debbie was electrified she felt the once dry wooden floor turn blizzardly cold and very soft. She opened her eyes to find herself standing on top of a giant snow hill . . . .*

Peter wrote an Orientation which prepared the reader for the Complication, and this time all was resolved smoothly.

> Expedition to Misty Mountain
>
> *It was a bleak cold day, the mist shrouded the mountain side. Snow lay several feet deep, and a large crevasse, almost invisible, cut along the mountain side.*
>
> *Suddenly a small figure emerged from the blanket of mist. He was John a man with a kindly, cheerful face and tall shape. After him came Kenaulen, an enthusiastic man who, as soon as he had learned about the trip, had volunteered to go. Next trundled Ya-Mov who carried the long range radio.*
>
> *Last of all Peter and Bob, side by side, struggled up the slope. Suddenly, with a cry of surprise and fear Kenaulen, who had been running, slipped on a patch of snow and plummeted down the crevasse . . . .*

Report writing

Our next point of focus was Report writing. Each day I read the children selections from non-fiction which provided models for Reports. Finding good-quality material of a suitable level for the class was not easy, and this may in part explain why there tend to be more Narrative writers than Report writers in the primary school.

About this time, as part of the Science/Social Studies program, we visited Hyde Park Barracks and the Mint — historic buildings in Sydney. The input prior to this excursion had been particularly interesting: one of the parents, who was the State Planner for the centre of Sydney, visited the class and gave an introductory talk on historic places. Following the excursion we put together a class model Report on Sydney's historic buildings to which the children were enthusiastic and knowledgeable contributors.

The children then selected their own subjects on which to write their Reports. I suggested that they use their interests as a starting point, and we set about doing the necessary research. The older children had the experience needed to locate material, they knew how to read for information, and they knew how to summarise. I was fully occupied helping the younger ones. Very few children were able to find sufficient information of a suitable level in the school library but, as we visited the local municipal library each week, we were able to continue the search there. Doing the research for almost any writing other than Narratives is time-consuming, but it is also time well spent, because the children are working in their own areas of interest at their own level and are developing research skills in meaningful situations.

When the children had as much information in note form as they felt they needed, we spent several days giving talks on the chosen topics. The children talked in pairs and in small groups so that everyone had more opportunity to talk, and so that the younger and less experienced children felt more secure. I involved myself in the talks and, when the groups came together for a general discussion, I used what I had observed in the small group work to illustrate the points I was endeavouring to teach. The older class members were able to offer suggestions, to be critical of unclear information in a positive way, and to question anything they could not understand. Individual writing plans were modified as a result.

When the Reports were written there was a range of quality but everyone understood the genre. Joe (Year 3) wrote:

Computers

Computers are machines that think for themselves.

Computers were invented one-hundred and fifty years ago. Computers are made up of microchips and sparks of power rushing through each other, and if too much power comes into one chip the chip blows up and that is called 'you blew a chip'.

I have got a computer. It is called the Apple and it can do all most every thing you can think of and many more.

I like computers because I can do all my pleasures.

In the library children can pursue individual research and call on expert assistance when they need it.

Overall the children and I worked on this particular session of Report writing (including the research and discussions) for two weeks. However, it was not the only writing attempted during the fortnight. In Social Studies/Science we were working on a unit on Australia, and during the course of study the children wrote other Reports and some Narratives, Summaries and informal Explanations.

Amongst the comments the children made on their Report writing were:

PETER: Finding the information was easy, but putting it down in your own words was hard.

SUSAN: It was hard to get information on Border Collies because people don't usually want to find out about them.

ALICE: I really enjoyed writing about cats because they're my favourite animal.

ALEXANDER: I chose 'Smoking' because my sister's godmother smokes, and I think it's bad. We've managed to stop her.

KATHRYN: I chose 'Fitness' because I'm training for the 'City to Surf'. I found lots of books and I took the information I needed. In general it's easy to get information if you try, if you go to the library and ask people.

Film Script

During the term we had been watching on television some of the ABC 'Writing' programs (NSW Dept of Education). The programs looked at the

reasons why people write and how they go about the process of writing. They encouraged children to try out different styles and types of writing. We chose the 'TV Script Writer' for special focus, because it showed Narrative in a different mode. The main steps which led up to the children writing their own TV scripts were these.

- We watched the video of 'TV Script Writer' twice.
- I read the children some plays the class had written in previous years.
- A writer who worked at one of the television channels came to talk to the children and to show them how he organised his scripts.
- Joe's mother who worked at the Film School talked about filming.

The process was again one of discussion, writing, trying out the action, modification and more writing.

When the scripts were completed, we chose one to make into a film. We decided that 'The Fat-Making Medicine' had a strong plot, it was set in a school, and, counting the crowd scenes, it had a part for everyone. The children discussed location details, they organised props, and everyone had a turn with the camera. Emily, who wrote the script, shared in the directing with Joe's mother. Here is a short extract.

(Scene 3 — In the Living Room)

Here we will have a cardboard box with a hole in it and knobs. (actor kneels and speaks so face is showing through hole) (props: T.V.) (close up of man on T.V.)	
	Man on T.V. — *Are you sick of being skinny? Do you want to plumpen up a bit? If you do, we can send you a bottle or two of Fedicente. To plumpen you up a bit. Phone 123 4567; that's 123 4567.*
Fatima walks from T.V. room to kitchen, she passes her mother who is knitting (mother doesn't say anything). (props: knitting gear) (medium shot of Fatima, and background)	
	Fatima — *(walking to phone) 123 4567 . . . 123 4567.*
For this stop there will be a commercial break. (props: one Trigger Fabulon) (average shot)	
	Chemist Lady (Connie) — *(in Aussie accent) Hello, Connie's Chemist. Who's speaking, darling?*
	Fatima — *Hi, I'm ringing about that um, ah, Flanbit.*
	Connie — *(in Aussie accent) Oh, you mean Fedicente.*
	Fatima — *Yeah, that's it.*
	Connie — *(in Aussie accent) How much would you like?*
	Fatima — *Fifty bottles, please.*
	Connie — *(nervously) You must have a problem, I'll send them over right away. (they both hang up)*
For this telephone conversation I would like a large shot close up with Connie and Fatima taking one half of the screen each. (props: two telephones and a chemist and a house)	

Procedures

It was shortly before the Easter holiday when we first talked about writing Procedures because, at this time, many of the children wanted to explain how to blow eggs and decorate them for Easter. To provide a model for instructing I read the class a book on the history of damper making (one of the books we had selected for the Australian Studies unit) and the children made individual decisions about subject matter for their writing.

Some of the children tried out their Procedures orally on the class; others worked with a friend. If the instructions could be understood and followed, they were ready for writing. Some children prepared detailed diagrams and drawings as part of their text. Tim explained how to wash a car; John, how to train a dog; Simon, how to take care of a baby. Paul offered 'instructions' for avoiding having to tidy up one's bedroom!

The writing was typed and published in a *How To . . .* book. We had a day testing the instructions for blowing and decorating eggs, for cooking rice and for making paper aeroplanes. We wrote and followed Procedures for turfing and making fires, and for making and baking damper. Emily commented, 'Knowing how to cook something is easy; explaining to someone how to do it, and writing down the instructions is hard.'

Explanations

Procedures led to Explanations. To help focus on the genre of explaining I asked the children to list ideas, events and situations which they did not understand and for which they would like an explanation: for example, weightlessness on the moon; why we have night and day; why dinosaurs became extinct. We kept a list of these questions, and over a day or two each child chose the question that puzzled or intrigued him or her most. Then began the research required to answer the questions.

It was at first quite difficult for some children to come to terms with explaining. They understood that an Explanation set out to test or justify a position taken by the writer and was therefore not a Report; they could explain quite well orally, but writing an Explanation proved difficult.

In their writing earlier in the term some children had offered explanations as part of their Report writing, and so it was helpful to read these examples to the group. As part of an earlier literature unit all the children had written imaginary Explanations for 'The Leopard Having Spots', 'The Rainbow Having Colours', 'The Echidna Having Spikes', etc. This writing experience helped the less able children understand the essence of factual Explanations. There was a great sense of achievement when the Explanations were complete, and Anna commented, 'Reports are easy so long as you can find the information you want; to explain is harder, because you have to turn the information into an Explanation.'

Emily wrote the following text to explain 'Weightlessness on the Moon'.

> *If you've seen astronauts on the moon, you probably noticed that they can jump very high. As a matter of fact, if you can jump 1.2 metres on*

the earth you could jump 7.2 metres on the moon. The reason that astronauts can jump so high on the moon is because of their weight on the moon. If you weigh 27 kilograms on the earth you would only weigh 4.5 kilograms on the moon.

This is the reason for this great weight change . . .

GRAVITY

If it weren't for gravity we would be floating around in space.

The gravity on the moon is weaker than that of the earth.

If there were a hole which went right down to the centre of the earth and you fell into it, you would fall right down to the centre of the earth. That's because gravity is pulling from the centre of the earth.

On the moon there is still a pull towards the centre but it's not as strong as the pull towards the centre of the earth.

And that's why we weigh less on the moon.

Exposition

During the second term we moved from Explanation to work on Exposition. I explained that in this genre the writer states an opinion or belief and presents arguments to support it. The children spent some time discussing what they felt strongly about and listing arguments in support.

One problem we had was that there were no suitable written models for this age group and so the children were more influenced by spoken genres like Debate and Oral Discussion. These are similar to Exposition but they are not ideal as models, partly because of differences between the way language is used in speech and in writing. Some children, when they wrote, set out their text as if they were taking part in an Oral Discussion with another person. But others made a statement about what they believed and followed with a series of statements in support. Elizabeth (Year 4) wrote:

Why I Believe the Australian Cricketers
Should Not Play in South Africa.

In South Africa there are many more blacks than there are whites. However the white people rule the country. They introduced a policy called 'apartheid' which means separation. This means that the black people can't go to the same schools, doctors, pubs, restaurants, theatres. They have to sit in the back of buses, walk on a different side of the road and drink out of different taps. They have to live in separate areas and never mix with whites. They cannot get the good jobs and have to be servants to the whites. I, along with most of the world, think this is cruel and unfair and should be changed at once so everyone in South Africa is treated equally.

Here are some reasons why I believe that the Australian Cricketers should not go to South Africa to play cricket:

1. *Because Australians think the apartheid policy is a bad one, we should do all we can to persuade the South Africans' leaders to change it.*

2. *By refusing to play sport with South Africa on an official level, we show them that we don't approve of their racial rules.*
3. *If we isolate them long enough they might be persuaded to change their rules. Because they are sports fanatics they will want to do anything to persuade foreign teams to compete against them.*
4. *If our cricketers do go, the South Africans' leaders will have no reason to change 'apartheid'.*
5. *Sports people are in the news, T.V., etc., so everybody hears about sporting bans. Therefore the point is made strongly.*
6. *The black people of South Africa have asked the world not to send teams and they are the ones we should listen to.*
7. *The Olympic Committee does not recognise South Africa — we shouldn't either.*

For these reasons and others I'm sure you will agree that the Australian Cricketers should not go to South Africa to play sport.

Most children felt similarly about such subjects as animal testing, violence on TV, zoos, conservation and pollution, but, having done the research to gain support for their beliefs, they found that there were often valid arguments for the opposite point of view. So we moved on to what seemed to be the most demanding genre attempted so far, Discussion.

Written Discussion

The children worked in pairs at mini debates, one child taking the affirmative point of view and the other the negative. Each debater had to marshall as many arguments as possible and present them to a group in a convincing manner. The group listened to both sides, looked for the better argument and judged accordingly.

Still working in pairs, the children then combined their points and made a decision about which side they supported. For example, in the debate on composite classes (their choice of topic) one girl had argued for and the other against. Both children, however, were largely for composite classes, and so when they wrote their Discussions they both concluded in favour. To present a balanced argument, each child used points taken from her partner's original draft as well as from her own. Here are some extracts from what Kathryn (Year 4) wrote.

Composite Classes?

There are many composite classes in Australian schools. These classes occur mostly in the country because there aren't very many children there. In a city school there are many children of the same age group. City schools don't need composite classes but sometimes they choose to have them. There are many arguments for both points of view . . . .

In a composite class the older children help the younger children and it is more like a family. Younger children model their behaviour on older

children, they get new ideas and they develop a more advanced vocabulary . . . .

In a composite class the older children teach the younger ones bad habits. However you do hear bad habits all around the playground so it has nearly nothing to do with composite classes.

In a normal class the teacher does not have to organise at least two different grades of work. Therefore planning does not take so much time. But I think that the best teachers would be prepared to organise more than one grade of work because all children work at their own pace.

The main disadvantages of composite classes seem to be friendship, grouping, and teachers having to plan too much work. But I think composite classes are a good idea for children who are working above or below their class level. Younger children model themselves on older children and learn good attitudes as well as more advanced work. Older children are more responsible and if necessary can consolidate their learning. For these reasons it seems that the advantages of composite classes are great.

David, the child mentioned before who had been in a support class the previous two years, wrote as follows.

Dogs on Beaches

Dogs make good pets. They guard and protect people, they can be used in a circus for tricks, but on the beach dogs are really awful because they can ruin your relaxing day. You really have to watch them, they might pinch your lunch, nip your son or daughter, or worse still go to the toilet in the sand.

Dogs Attract Sharks
It has been proven that dogs attract sharks. If a dog is jumping around in the waves that dog is endangering other people's lives, so this is a good reason why dogs should not be allowed on beaches.

Dogs Are Messy
Dogs can be very messy. For example their number 2's make it very unpleasant for people and it is very unhealthy, especially for young children.

Divide the Beach?
People are big litterers. You sometimes find on beaches that there's broken glass and broken can bits lying around, and that is dangerous for people and dogs. That is why we should divide the beach into parts, one part for people with dogs, one part for people without dogs.

Let Dogs on the Beach?
The dogs don't know that they might be stepping where they shouldn't, or going to the toilet where people want to sunbathe. They can't help it if they do the wrong thing, therefore they should be kept off the beaches. Dogs are messy and disturbing and annoying, so for these reasons I think dogs should not be allowed on beaches.

Conclusion

Finally, let me pick up some of the main points underlying the approach described in this chapter.

- Children need to have an understanding of the process of writing and plenty of opportunities to use it.
- Children need to read, and hear read to them, a wide range of literature, both fiction and non-fiction.
- Teachers need to help children recognise the ways in which authors structure and organise their writing to achieve different purposes.
- Children need to learn to control a range of genres.
- Many of these genres need to be specifically introduced to children. The point at which a particular genre is introduced arises out of the classroom program.
- If children develop control over a range of genres, they are able to choose the one most appropriate to their purpose.

6

Elizabeth O'Connell

WRITING REPORTS IN YEAR 4

This chapter illustrates some aspects of teaching a specific genre and learning to write in that genre as a teacher explores Reports with a group within her class. The teacher is feeling her way and so are the pupils. Elizabeth O'Connell 'chooses' the Report genre as being a good one to try out, knowing that it will be useful in much of her class's work. She does all this on the basis of several years' experience working with the process approach and a careful reading of what various writers have said about both process and genre in teaching writing.

How much should we intervene in children's writing? Advocates of a genre-based approach, such as Jim Martin and Joan Rothery, maintain vehemently that it is the task of schools to teach specific genres that are not learned naturally. Clare Painter (1986, pp. 92–93) even states that it is not enough to 'expect' children to master a variety of genres merely by supplying them with models or ambitious lists of topics.

Within my own classroom I had found that just reading a variety of genres to the children, or ensuring that there was a wealth of genres available for reading in the classroom, had not been enough. Most children in my experience tend to 'steer clear' of factual writing, concentrating mainly on Recount and Narrative. Thus they do not automatically learn to 'write by writing' all the types of writing they may need.

Even when I set topics in order for the class to 'gain control' of a wide range of writing, I found that I was repeating many of the same things in conferences with individual children, and I also felt the conferences were requiring too much teacher-direction. Furthermore, the children seemed to need help in planning or structuring their writing beforehand, particularly in the factual area. Having noticed these things in my own classroom, I was interested to see what both process and genre advocates were advising on teacher intervention.

Donald Graves (1984, pp. 191–92) states that the teacher may need to intervene by suggesting a student tries a new genre, that 'approximately twenty percent of a writer's diet ought to be assigned', or set, and that modelling of a new genre is important, particularly in the content areas. Such flexibility is valuable in the process approach. However, we must also consider how children achieve control of a genre and whether time is being used economically. Is there a place for a genre focus in the process approach?

Genrists support many ideas of the process approach. They agree on the value of writing, and on the focus on meaning rather than spelling and punctuation. They support the drafting and reworking of text and the notion of publishing (Rothery 1986, pp. 25, 38, 47). They also maintain that the topic is best chosen by the children and that children learn by immersion — that is, by writing. Both schools of thought advocate the supply of good model texts and emphasise the importance of positive assessment and constructive comments when sharing. Rothery (1986, p. 38) even suggests that the conference approach may be employed to good effect as the stages of a genre are consolidated. All of this was promising.

The genrists' claims that writing should be taught in the way that spoken language is developed made sense to me. Rothery (1986, p. 8) uses Bruner's term *scaffolding* to describe the way the adult, through questions or comments, assists the child in a joint construction of text. The development of the text stage by stage is worked out or 'negotiated' through interaction (p. 25). As this goes on, children internalise the models of the genre while their own meanings and individuality are still respected. They can then go on to produce solo efforts, developing their knowledge of the particular genre and their individual expression. Further consolidation may take place within small groups, or in individual conferences if needed.

All of this attracted my immense interest. I felt I could treat different genres more effectively using shared, meaningful experiences, saving much duplication of work in the process, and still allow for individual development and extension at the same time. Freedom of choice within the genre, conferencing according to individual need, editing, publishing and so on could still take place, while the children would gain the great benefits of 'control' over a wider range of genres. In addition, when specific genres were not being treated, the normal freedom of choice in process writing could be resumed. Hence the excellent advances and valuable practices of the process approach would not be disregarded.

The Report genre

With these things in mind, I decided to experiment with a small group of my Year 4 students, employing direct intervention in order to teach a particular genre. I chose the Report because it is a useful genre for primary school children, providing them with a means of organising and writing up factual material which can be applied in several areas of the curriculum. I had seen the need for this in the work we had done on Australian animals. Moreover,

it is fairly straightforward and would be both easy for me to treat, and easy, I felt, for the children to understand. I wanted to keep things as simple as possible, not wishing to confuse the children or lose their enthusiasm.

Earlier in the year, the children in my class had made very good attempts at Reports on such topics as 'Anzac Day' and 'The Georges River'. They had written on topics of their own choice (such as 'Japan' and 'Remote Control Cars') when I had suggested that they write about a thing or place they were interested in. They had also completed projects on an Australian animal of their choice. While they had been given a demonstration of how to set out and organise their work, I realised that I had not really made them aware of what a written Report is and how to organise it properly (see pp. 18 and 26 above).

Within my class, I chose a small group of children of mixed ability. I wanted to familiarise the children in the group with the characteristics of the Report genre, to treat the two parts, General Classification and Description, and in particular to focus on the organisation of the Description. It seemed logical to teach some sort of organisation of this section, e.g. by way of a structured overview. I was interested in observing the children's attitudes, the process by which they would go about writing their own Reports and the products presented. I did not, at any time, mention personal feelings within Reports. I wanted to see whether or not children expressed personal views and, if so, how they did it. Teaching the parts of a Report and how to organise them was enough to concentrate on at this stage. The place of personal opinion in such writing could be treated at a later time, if necessary.

Teaching the genre

I decided to follow the steps set out by Rothery (1986, pp. 7-9) for introducing a new genre. Basically, they are as follows.

1 The teacher becomes familiar with the genre.

2 The genre is introduced to the class. This includes reading many examples to the children and making examples available for them to read.

3 The teacher works with the children to assist them in developing control of the genre, e.g. by helping them to identify its characteristics.

4 Teacher and pupils work on joint construction of texts in the genre through group writing, using careful scaffolding and negotiation as mentioned earlier.

5 From here, the children are encouraged to produce solo efforts, for which they choose the topics. Conferencing with the teacher takes place and other aspects of process writing (e.g. revising, editing and publishing) are employed.

Once I had become familiar with the Report genre myself, I read Reports to the group and made available as many as I could for the group to read. However, there was a scarcity of examples which were simple enough and set out clearly, beginning with a General Classification and following with an

organised and well-defined Description. Most Reports made available were thus my own, adapted from books or my own knowledge. One, 'The Echidna', was adapted from a child's writing.

Identifying the structure of Reports read

I encouraged the children to reflect upon the Reports they had read or heard, and to try to identify the structure and characteristics of the genre. I asked questions such as these:

Can you see any ways Reports are all the same?
How are they set out?
What is a Report? What is it about?
What does it do?
How is it different from a story?

Answers from different children included:

They're true.
It's usually about one thing only. It's like facts.
It tells you the most important facts. It gives you information.
You pick out the most interesting things so people will want to read it.
It goes from most important to least important.

In this first short session the children did not identify the two parts of a Report, so I devoted another short session to this. Here are some excerpts from the discussion.

TEACHER: Read the first line of each of the Reports I have given you. What does the first line do?
CHILD: It tells you what the things are.
CHILD: Like if it's a bird or what it is.
TEACHER: What about the rest of the piece?
CHILD: It sort of tells you about the thing.
CHILD: I know, it describes the thing.

From here, children were asked to read some stencilled Reports, first silently and then to a partner. Then they were asked individually to circle the General Classification and go on to try to identify different parts of the Description.

This was done very well. All children found the General Classification. Most children were able to identify and label different sections of the Description (e.g. for the Echidna: food, babies, etc.), though the earlier project on Australian animals may have helped here. Some children had a bit more trouble actually circling sections, but did circle sentences (e.g. for the Echidna: 'They eat worms and other insects').

Group-writing on 'The Kangaroo'

I used a set of steps outlined by Hennings (1982, p. 9) to produce a group

'And what else could go here?' Elizabeth O'Connell builds up a structured overview with her class for the Kangaroo Report.

piece of writing with the children on Kangaroos. The sequence, in which oral interaction leads into organised writing, was as follows.

1 Brainstorming facts.
2 Categorising of facts 'stormed' into related groups. (We used a structured overview, as shown in the photograph above.)

3 Collaborative drafting (in pairs) of paragraphs based on groups of interrelated facts.

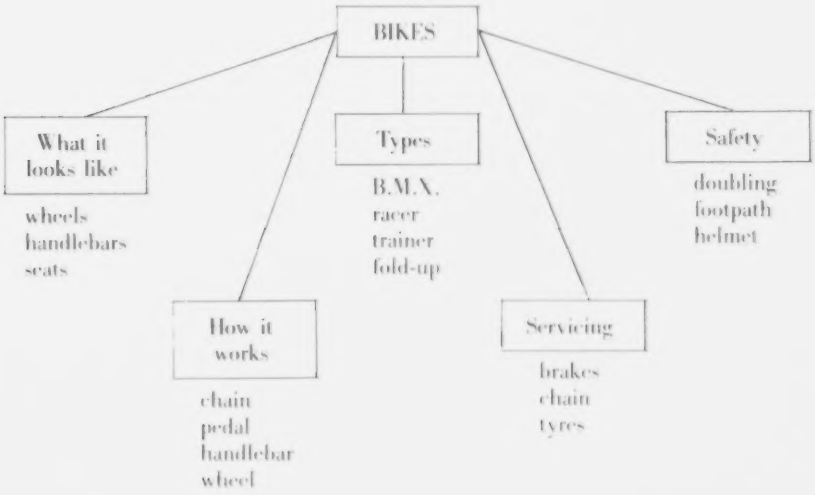
4 Sequencing paragraphs into an interrelated whole. (We discussed the level of importance of individual paragraphs.)

5 Drafting introduction and conclusion.

The brainstorming session and grouping of facts were very worthwhile. The children really enjoyed this and produced an excellent piece of writing. Overall, I would recommend Hennings' method as a most beneficial group-writing lesson.

Group-writing on 'Bikes'

We then jointly constructed one more piece of writing on Bikes, another topic chosen by the children. Again we used a structured overview. Headings and supporting facts worked out by the children were as follows:



The final piece of writing is set out below: it conforms to Report structure but could still be improved in detail.

Bikes

A bicycle is a two-wheeled machine that is pedal-operated.

A bicycle has two wheels with spokes and rubber tyres. It also has a solid chrome frame, with a seat on the top for the rider and a chain which helps the pedal move the wheels.

Handlebars help you steer. A chain which is on a frame is powered by the pedals. When the pedals are turned by our feet, they move the chain which causes the wheels to turn.

To keep your bike in good condition, you have to make sure the tyres are pumped up, keep the bike clean, oil the chain, ride it regularly and get your parents to check the brakes.

There are many different types of bikes. Some examples are: B.M.X., children's racing bikes, racer bikes for adults, fold-up bikes, ladies' bikes and trainer bikes which have two extra wheels. Some types of B.M.X. are: Diamond Back, Red Line and Crusader.

To keep your bike safe, you must check it regularly. Some safety precautions are: not riding on the footpath, wearing a safety helmet, don't wear thongs, always watch carefully where you're going and don't double.

The children's individual Reports

From here, the children set out to write their own Reports, choosing their own topics and using a structured overview.

Assistance was given only if asked for and I followed process-writing guidelines. I found the children needed some help with topics at times, so I assisted by asking them what they were interested in, what hobbies they had, what animal, place or thing they felt they knew a lot about, whether they could think of anything we had covered in class which they felt they knew a lot about, and so on. A list of suggested topics was also placed on the wall of the classroom.

From the wealth of examples I have chosen three to give the reader an idea of the general results. They are from children of different ability levels and are first drafts.

'Oil' is the first three paragraphs of a text from one of the best writers in the class. It may appear to be partly copied but in fact it was written in class by the boy himself after he had immersed himself in information about the oil industry.

Oil

Oil is a thick black substance found under the earth.

Oil is made up of a mixture of Carbon and Hydrogen. Oil is graded into three groups: metane gas, light petroleum oil and heavy oil that is almost solid.

Oil is formed when living things die and then rot. They get covered by hundreds of metres of earth. They then rot and change into oil. They stay underground until they are extracted by humans about one hundred years after the process has finished.

The next example is from a child of average ability (one paragraph is omitted).

Piano

A piano is a musicle insterment.

The sound is made by strings inside the piano. So when you hit the key a wooden hammer joined to the key hits the string and the strings vibrat to make a sound . . .

There are all sorts of music you can play on a piano. Sometimes you may join a band and make music. If you begin piano you start with eezy. You must practice 6 days a week and realy try hard. So practice makes perfect.

The last example is a complete Report from a child of lower ability.

German Shepherd

A German Shepherd is a dog. Its colour is grey, and white sometimes. German Shepherds will eat anything you give them. I give my German Shepherd dog biscuits, meat, pal and leftovers. German Shepherds have their babies alive and they feed them bye theire nippels they have about 9 babies.

Other titles chosen included Tap Dancing, Police Officers, Cheetahs, Horses, Go-Carts and Christmas. After each piece of writing, I asked the children to write down where they thought they had gained their information, e.g. from general knowledge, experience, books, other people. This was a worthwhile probe.

Reports from other children

Three texts are included from children who were not part of the small group. Again they are first drafts. These examples show that while these children provided some general factual information about their topics, it was not clearly distinguished from specific personal experience and comments. Moreover, their General Classifications were not well defined. The first example gives extracts from a text by a good writer.

Japan

Japan is a very expensive place. Eg, an apple costs a dollar. My family and I are flying on J.A. to Japan. J.A. means Japanese airlines. We have a lot of friends in Japan that are all rich . . . . Tetsuya has had lamborginies, porches, pantaras. They have got a go kart each . . . .

Japanese are very striked like at a Japanese resterant you have to take off your shoes at the front door. Some of the cloths are called kimonoes. One custom in Japan is if you want to blow your nose or something you have to do it in a quiet room where nobody can here you . . . . I can't wait to go to Japan its going to be exciting.

The next two examples are complete texts.

Remote Control Cars

Remote control cars are unreal for a hobbie. I have 2 of them. So if fun is your name racing cars are your game. They are called the frog and the wild willy. The wild willy can do whellies. It can go faster than the frog. The frog is not going at the moment. They are powered by the servos which are two little boxes that are in control of forward, reverse, right and left which run to the gear box and the front two wheels. You can also by four wheel drives such as Hot Shot, Big Bear, Optima.

From a child of lower ability:

Birds

Birds can fly a lot. Birds use there wings to fly. Ive got 10 birds at home in 2 big cages. Me and my dad get new baby birds every month. Me and dad clean the cage out every saturday.

We feed them and put water in the bouls every 2 days I check the breeding boxes for eggs it's great fun for me.

Children's comments on Report writing

Some of the comments which the children made on Report writing were these.

> I'd like to do it about once a week, with stories the rest of the time.
>
> I think it was good because if you're not good at stories, like in using your imagination, you could be clever in telling the truth about things.
>
> You don't leave things out and you plan it first. You know what you're doing and you plan it first.

The children liked Report writing, though some said not as much as 'story-writing'. Those children who used the structured overview commented on the advantages of planning their work in this way. They really seemed to enjoy organising their material.

Reflections

These reflections are based on the work I have described which was done with a small, though typical group of children within my class.

- Teaching generic structure through planned activities, guidance toward discovery and teacher/student interaction seems to be an effective way of helping children develop proficiency in a specific genre. Proficiency was evident in a much shorter time than in normal process-writing sessions.
- This focus did seem to assist children greatly in writing good-quality reports even on the first draft. Their writing was much better organised and more relevant, and they demonstrated a far greater understanding of the purpose of the genre itself than had been evident in my experience of first drafts of normal process-writing pieces.
- The process approach can be used effectively to help children 'gain control' of the Report genre. However, my experience suggests that if we rely completely on this approach to establish the genres, the conferences involve much repetition for the teacher, with many similar questions being asked and similar discussions taking place. Thus focussing on specific genres appears to be much more economical in terms of time spent with the children. Time saved may of course be spent more profitably dealing with specific problems or on extension.

- Jim Martin (1985, p. 10 and 1984, p. 44) and Joan Rothery (1986, p. 52) suggest the teaching of guidelines or the use of headings to help children to organise the Description part of the Report. Such organisation, they maintain, is an important step toward paragraphing and argument in expository writing later. My experience would most definitely support this.

  All children who used the structured overviews showed an awareness of paragraphing even though they had no previous experience of it. All, even those of lower ability, physically separated each section of their overview as they wrote their Reports. Methods they used included leaving lines in between the sections, drawing boxes around them, placing asterisks between them and taking new lines.

- Imposing topic or form on young writers doesn't seem to stifle creativity. When children chose their own topics later, individual style was evident. If genre teaching is interspersed with freer process, their creativity can have plenty of scope. Jim Martin (1985, p. 8) makes the point that creativity can be found in virtually any genre.

- Girls were just as keen on Report writing as the boys and demonstrated similar proficiency. Observing the children's process writing in the week after my work with the group, I found more girls than boys chose of their own accord to write Reports rather than Narrative.

Conclusion

Overall, I believe that teaching the Report genre is valid, worthwhile and time-saving. It quickly and effectively helps children to gain control of the genre. Such teaching need not be at the expense of process writing, but should be carefully and sensitively combined with it to improve on what the teacher is already doing. Specific intervention need take up only a proportion of overall writing time and must not be a mechanical, inhibiting control of the children's writing. Rather it should involve professional guidance and student interaction.

Many features of process writing can play a part in the implementation of such teaching. The result will be rapid progress towards developing control not only of the Report genre but of others as well, especially in the content areas. We will then witness writers leaving our primary schools much more effectively prepared for high school and later life.

7

Ross Weightman

THE NARRATIVE GENRE IN YEARS 3 AND 4

Ross Weightman is another teacher who, after several years of experience with the process approach, wanted to find ways of becoming more effective in guiding his pupils in specific aspects of their writing. In this chapter he explains how he worked through the issues with his class. He has focussed particularly on the Narrative genre and he describes how he and his students explored different kinds of Narrative.

In recent times Donald Graves has had a big influence on the way writing is being taught in Australia. A strong emphasis has been placed on the writing process, with children being given control over all aspects — rehearsal, drafting, editing and publishing. However, Joan Rothery (1986) emphasises not only the processes involved in writing but also the form of the writing, or the product. Just as the process approach actively involves children with a model of the way adults write, so Joan Rothery emphasises that we as teachers should also involve children in the writing of established genres.

Our school had reached the stage where the children had been brought up on process writing since they started school, and this approach was a familiar part of the daily routine. Yet, despite its familiarity, I had come to feel that some aspects of the approach needed closer examination. In this chapter I will explain some of my concerns as a teacher and the steps I took to meet my students' needs.

Comfortable writing

The first concern I had was this. I could easily see that while the writing process itself was developing well and most of the children were generally very comfortable with some specific types of writing, their expertise with

other types was very limited. They often wrote in the Observation/Comment genre. They also wrote Recounts, frequently adding a Comment at the end.

They favoured specific types of the Narrative genre too. Generally speaking, the boys displayed a liking for horror stories with plenty of action and gore. They also favoured humour in a variety of forms. The girls would sometimes write in these ways, though they generally preferred fairy tales or animal stories.

Because the children were more comfortable with some types than others, there seemed to be a sameness about the class stories as a whole. Although it was a problem that was hard to deal with in the context of process writing as it operated in my classroom, I tried a number of things to get the children to branch out into other Narrative types. I drew their attention to the range available by making up a chart of the different types of Narrative (see p. 65 below). We discussed alternatives to the types they were using, both at a whole-class level and individually through the writing conference.

Some important points soon became obvious. Firstly, competency with the writing process as a whole did not guarantee competency in a given Narrative type. Secondly, competency in one specific type did not mean competency in other Narrative types.

Incomplete Narratives

My second major concern was that as the children wrote in Narrative types, whether they were horror, mystery, adventure or fable, there were usually gaps or defects in the basic structure of the stories they wrote. With some children the Orientation would be missing or incomplete. With others the Complication would be poorly defined. Others would have no effective Resolution. 'The Day I Became a Millionaire' exhibits some of these problems.

> *One spooky night I was thinking about me being a millionaire. So I went to the bank and said what can I do to become a millionaire. He said how much money do you want? Then I replied I would like two million and eighty eight dollers. He said O.K. and said you have to do nothing to get the money. I said I am a millionaire and ran off.*

In order to overcome the problem, I wrote a short Narrative on the board containing the basic components. We identified the various parts and discussed how they related to each other. In describing the three Narrative components I used the terms *setting*, *problem* and *ending*, though there is no reason why children cannot learn to use the terms *orientation*, *complication* and *resolution* if they are explained properly.

Through discussions, the children were asked to identify these parts, explain them and provide alternatives. As a reading/writing activity, they were asked to complete a big cloze passage with Narrative elements missing. Identification was also reinforced during reading conferences and through discussion of stories read aloud.

As a class we then talked about a subject for a good Narrative and wrote a jointly constructed text on the board. Contributions were received from

Ross Weightman is the co-ordinator and scribe for a jointly constructed Narrative.

eager children and the most popular suggestions were usually used. My role was co-ordinator — clarifying points as they arose, drawing out more information, ensuring ideas were relevant and making sure the overall structure was cohesive.

The children were then directed to write their own Narratives, just as they would in a process writing lesson. When some children were stuck for ideas, I made no objection to them borrowing ideas from the class story on the board, as long as it didn't simply become a transcribing exercise. Conferences were then held in order to reinforce individual efforts and provide help where necessary.

The result was a big improvement in the quality of Narratives being written, and where component parts were missing, the children at least had an understanding of the problem and were usually able to sort it out.

Amanda came to me with a Narrative based on a fairy tale. In a very quick conference I asked her what the problem in her story was. She was able to identify it quickly. I then asked her to identify the ending. This she also did quickly. Then I asked her if she saw anything curious there. In a classic 'Aha!' experience, she was able to point out that the ending didn't relate to the problem. Off she went to find a solution.

Red Riding Hood

Once there was a girl called Red Riding Hood. She liked to wear red, she liked to ride her bike and she loved to wear hoods.

One day when she was riding down the road she saw someone in a

giant hood riding the other way. Red Riding Hood stopped her bike in a pile of mud and started to run after the hood on the bike.

As she ran along she slipped on a banana peel and went for a ride over the car that was in front of her and left banana marks all over it.

FIRST ENDING

At last she stopped and said, 'That's the biggest ride I've ever been on.'

SECOND ENDING

Suddenly she saw the same giant hood coming towards her. It scooped her up and took her to her bike and then it disappeared.

She rode home and when she got home her mother said to her, 'What happened to your beautiful clothes and your beautiful bike?'

She thought, 'Oops, it must have been the mud.'

Her mother said, 'I think you better go to bed.'

When she got to the bedroom she thought, 'I wonder where that hood did come from?'

Mixed Narratives

Generally speaking, the confusion in the class about Narrative structure was greatly reduced. In solving one problem, however, I had indirectly generated another, and this became my third area of concern. While the children certainly had the general idea of Narrative, there was a consistent tendency to blend specific types together. For instance, simple adventure stories were blended with horror or fairy tales. One child wrote a legend and was proceeding beautifully until the ending, where instead of a conventional ending for a legend (which would provide an explanation for the behaviour of a smoking volcano) he provided a disaster ending typical of disaster movies.

As I mentioned before, the boys were especially interested in humour in their writing. The pieces of writing I received also had blends of humour, ranging from slapstick descriptions to dialogue from cartoons seen on television. This was typical of a glaring lack of harmony or uniformity within many of the stories I received. The idea of teaching a general type of Narrative structure didn't seem to be a complete answer. Many children seemed to need a more thorough knowledge of the structures and conventions of the specific types they were trying to write, although there were a few who were able to write well in specific forms that they had not tried previously. I decided to use again the same process that I had had some success with, this time concentrating on specific Narrative types. This proved to be much more successful.

Teaching specific Narrative types

In this section I've included what I see as the main areas of concern for helping children to develop control of specific Narrative types. It is important to realise that, as in most learning situations, the sequence in which experiences are presented can be very important.

1 Experiencing

If children are to write well in a specific type, then they must have had some previous experience with that type. Children should both hear stories read to them and read them for themselves. Children can also gain experience with language patterns and Narrative structures from audio tapes and videos.

2 Awareness

After children have had ample exposure to a particular type, it is important that they become aware of its characteristics and of how it differs from other types. Some children will be able to make their own generalisations through experience. Others may not be able to verbalise what they know very easily, and it is here that discussion plays a useful role.

When discussing a story with children, talk briefly about settings, problems or endings. You might ask questions like these.

> What type of ending does this story have? How is it similar to other fairy tales?
>
> What is this legend telling us? What purpose do you think legends are written for?
>
> What types of locations do we find in adventure stories?
>
> What do we always find in the setting of a choose-your-own-adventure story?
>
> What types of problems did this serial have? Can anyone think of any other story that has the same types of problems?
>
> How is this science fiction story different from a normal adventure story?
>
> What important part must a fable always have?

Discussion sessions should not be long and drawn out. One or two carefully chosen questions at the end of a story will be adequate. The idea of questioning is merely to create an awareness of some aspects of Narrative structure.

3 Providing a framework

When children have become familiar with the structure of a particular Narrative type, it is time to teach them how to write in that type. This involves instruction, demonstration and interaction to provide a framework on which children can build. There are a number of ways to do this.

1 Produce class or group stories. Before the children write, create the story in speech together. Here the children get immediate feedback and have the general form demonstrated to them in a setting in which they can interact. A cassette recorder can be useful.

2 Use diagrams that provide a framework. In place of direct teacher/student interaction, diagrams can provide the framework for any short Narrative. Here is an example.

Why Volcanoes Smoke

Orientation When Where Who	*A long time ago when the earth was young there was a large, ferocious, demon pig that used to roam in the jungle.*
Complication	*The pig would stalk the villages at night and steal children from their families. Then it would take them back to its cave deep in the mountain and eat them.* *One night when the moon was bright, the pig crept into a village near a large river. Here it found a new born baby asleep and took it back to its cave.*
Resolution	*The moon saw clearly what was happening and was very angry at the pig. He was so angry that he took a deep breath and spat a ball of fire at the pig. The pig was burnt alive in its cave. And even today you see smoke from the fire rising out of the mountain.*

3 Big Cloze Passages. These involve passages with more than one word deleted. The length of the deletion can range from a phrase to a number of paragraphs.

4 Discussion. Here an author's work can be looked at in detail and the component parts of the genre can be discussed. The overhead projector can be put to good use for analysing stories. Small groups can be given texts to cut, re-arrange or highlight.

5 Definitions. Cards or charts providing definitions of specific types can be a very useful teaching aid if accessible. Here are two examples.

Mystery

1. Requires clever thinking and aims to puzzle the reader as much as the characters.
2. Usually first or third person.
3. Reader given clues throughout — solution falls into place with gripping climax. Story line needs to be well thought out.

Fairy Tales

1. Happens in past — time period not defined.
2. Problem or series of problems.
3. Usually happy ending.
4. May involve the supernatural.
5. Realms not necessarily defined.
6. Usually a basic conflict between good and evil.

4 Individual attempts and the conference

When children have been given appropriate guidelines by the teacher, they are ready to attempt their own stories. The individual attempt can follow exactly the same lines as the process approach. This involves rehearsing ideas, drafting, editing, conferencing and publishing. It is during the conference that the teacher can identify any specific weaknesses in the form, as well as attend to other conventions.

Donald Graves (in Walshe [ed.]1981, p. 9) regards the conference as being an important part of the child's writing development. He sees the need to keep as much control as possible in the hands of the child and to care for the child's own intentions in writing. When we focus on specific genres, the general thrust behind this point is still possible and in fact desirable. The only major difference is that the teacher has already supplied a framework of conventions governing form.

Whereas Graves would say that it is not the teacher's job to prompt or prescribe, the teacher concerned with teaching specific genres or types may need to do just that at certain times. Graves frequently indicates that the young writer may not know what he or she wants to write until the project is well under way. Because the goal is much clearer in teaching genres, it is quite reasonable for the teacher to steer the student in a particular direction — for example:

> 'Your description doesn't tell us much about the main character — how do you think you could improve it?'

> 'I am a little confused about when and where your story is actually taking place. Read your orientation again and see if you can give your readers a bit more information about that.'

The teacher can still guide the student through questioning, but this is easier because teacher and student already share the same language for referring to specific parts of the text.

5 Publishing

Children clearly enjoy reading each other's stories, and reaching an audience is a prime reason for writing Narrative. I therefore make sure that when children publish a story, it becomes part of the class library. This of course

means that the story must be presented in some durable form. The best and simplest way I've found to do this is to pull class exercise books apart, give children the number of pages required and then staple the pages to cardboard. The story then looks like a book, and with the addition of appropriate headings and illustrations it becomes a valued and popular part of the class library.

Planning and evaluating

Which types should we teach?

The main types of Narrative likely to come up in a primary class are: mystery, adventure, fantasy, science fiction, fairy tale, choose-your-own-adventure, fable, serial, spoof/take-off, myth and legend, and moral tale.

All Narrative types have some kind of Orientation, Complication and Resolution. These are the basic elements. Longer, more complicated stories have more complex structures with minor Complications and Resolutions as well.

Narrative types overlap to varying degrees. For instance, while mystery, adventure and horror are distinct categories, some stories may have the characteristics of all of these categories. The main variable in all of the categories is the purpose the story was written for and the reason it will be read.

With such a range of Narrative types available we have to decide which ones to teach. One way is to decide as a staff or grade. Another way is to link Narrative types with a theme or topic under study. For instance, legends can be linked to studies of early Australian culture, horror to themes on monsters, and so on. The simplest way is to monitor the choices of the children when they are given freedom to choose.

Programming

The teaching of Narrative types has important implications for programming. This can be illustrated in my program, which consists of a blend of the process writing approach and activities aimed at teaching specific genres.

Weeks 3 — 5 Focus: Narrative types — legends

Objectives

The children will be able to describe aspects of form and conventions relating to legends.

The children will be able to write a short legend using appropriate form and conventions.

Integration

Related to Social Studies theme — 'Who are Australia's Near Neighbours?'

Experiences

Listening to legends from the Pacific Islands — *When the Moon was Big.*

Reading from above book.

Discussion related to form, meaning and conventions.

	LESSON 1	LESSON 2	LESSON 3	LESSON 4
WEEK 3	• Discussing & defining form. • Oral text based on box diagrams. • Joint written text within box diagrams.	• Individual efforts: brainstorm topics: start own writing.	• Focus Activity: shaping & editing board text — 'Orientation'. • Individual writing & conferences.	• Focus Activity: shaping & editing board text — 'Complication'. • Individual writing & conferences.
WEEK 4	• Focus Activity: shaping & editing board text — 'Resolution'. • Individual writing & conferences.	• Focus Activity: style of language. Discuss, edit, create. • Individual writing & conferences.	• Focus Activity: clarifying ideas, discussing, using vocab. • Individual writing & conferences.	• Focus Activity: publishing format. • Individual writing & conferences.
WEEK 5	• Reading completed efforts. • Individual writing & conferences.			

Evaluation
Conference observations, teaching points recorded.
Checklist of skills.

Over the period of a term I would expect the children to become acquainted with one or perhaps two new genres or types (not necessarily all Narrative). The time not devoted to teaching a specific genre is devoted to the familiar process writing approach. This gives the children the chance to consolidate and become independent in what they have learned. Any work the children were doing before the new genre was introduced is simply put on the back burner and resumed after the genre unit is completed.

Evaluating

The teaching of a specific genre involves a specific path of instruction. It is therefore very important that both the children's writing and your own teaching be evaluated. I find anecdotal records the most useful. Every piece of work should be looked at regardless of whether it is for publishing. Observations on strengths and weaknesses in the areas of form, meaning and use of conventions can be made. Periodically these can be related to a checklist of developmental skills.

Classroom cameos

I've included here some examples of the ways in which I have treated specific Narrative forms. They are not meant to be prescriptive but rather to provide ideas that may be borrowed or built on.

Narratives containing humour

My classes in the last two years contained many more boys than girls. In both classes the genre which seemed one of the most popular with the boys was the spoof or 'take-off'. It was also one of the least well understood, for as the children attempted to create humour in their writing, there was generally a profusion of language bordering on the vulgar, transformed radio and television jingles, slapstick descriptions and crude deviations from well-worn themes in stories.

I was at a loss for solutions to the problem. In the writing conference I was making little progress and I was very tempted to ban this form of writing and make the children write 'sensible' stories. I decided against it, however, as the boys in the class were doing more writing than they ever had.

What was obvious was that there was a variety of influences on the way in which humour was treated — and most of it from television, especially cartoons, e.g. *Roger Ramjet*, *Get Smart*, *Inspector Gadget*, etc. As a first step I provided examples of literary humour so as to add an extra influence. Every day for weeks the children were read to from books such as Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* and Osmar White's *Super-Roo of Mungalongaloo*. This was to help them internalise the form of this type of Narrative.

Through discussion the children were made aware of the unique aspects of this particular form, such as ridiculous language and events placed in a conventional context. To help develop their awareness they were asked as a whole class and in small groups to provide segments to complete a short story I had created and written on the board. This was simply a spoof of a comic-type superhero (in the mould of Bugs Bunny and Super Ted).

The children were made aware that their responses had to be in keeping with the type of humour the story was based on. For instance, the laughs had to come from events and language appropriate to the story line. This was hard for some children, who felt that all that was necessary was an outrageous statement or a piece of playground slang.

Through this activity the children were involved in discussion, reading and thinking and were generally benefiting from other children's ideas. They came to use the appropriate language in spoken and written form, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of how humour is written.

After a whole class discussion of the children's responses, a complete class story was written on the board. The children were then invited to write their own spoofs. This was done under normal conference writing conditions with children taking different times and creating works of different size and quality.

After this experience most of the children could write quite good stories, with most having the prerequisite basic structure. The few children in the

class who didn't demonstrate knowledge of the form were at least able to see and acknowledge the problem involved. It was then just a matter of revising and reworking.

One important point to note is that the whole class lessons greatly reduced the time required for conferencing because they removed any real misunderstandings. Often the writing was ready for publishing immediately. Small points concerning language conventions needed to be covered, but I could devote more time to children who needed a little extra assistance.

Choose-your-own-adventures

The class set of choose-your-own-adventures had always been very popular, and Nathan, who was a devoted fan, decided to try and write one of his own. After a number of weeks and numerous conferences, the product was finished. It seemed a modest effort, though it had in fact required a lot of thinking and effort to create a workable example of quite a sophisticated Narrative type.

Soon other children were seeking advice on ways to get started and conference time became quite repetitive. I decided that everyone would benefit from the exercise of writing their own choose-your-own-adventure story, and, to begin with, read examples regularly to the class. The children would vote on which path to follow.

Then, on occasions after the reading, we would focus on component parts of the story through discussion. We talked about the importance of making sure that the main problem was identified soon after the story had started and that the story contained both major and minor Complications. Sometimes the major Complication was never followed because of the misleading paths involved. It was also important to focus on action and plot and not get too involved in descriptions.

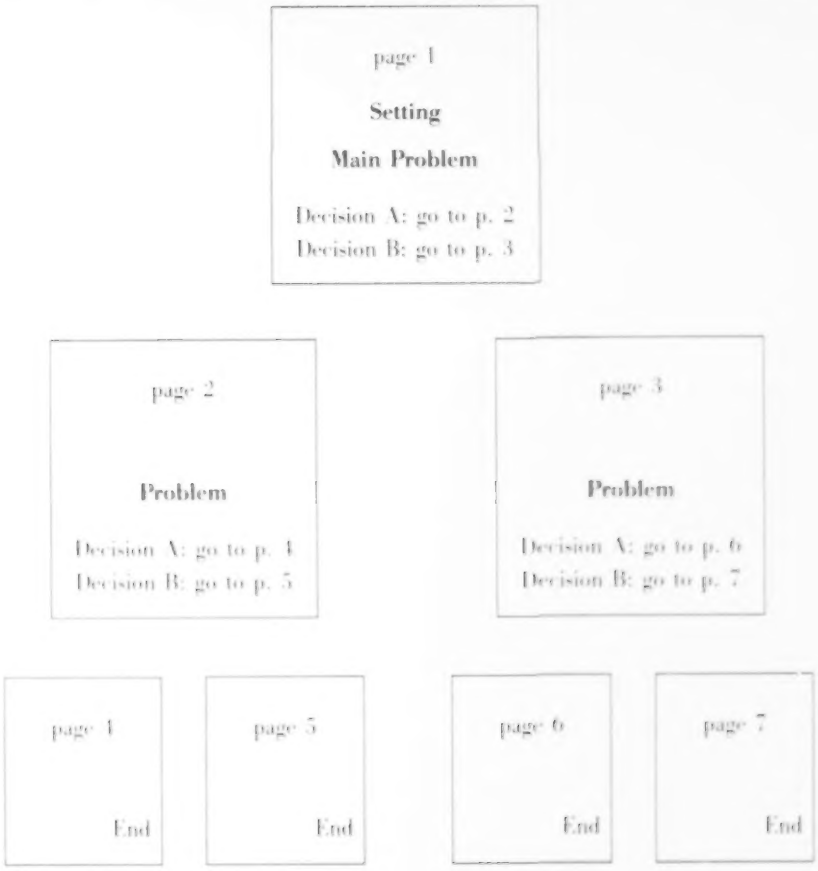
The children were then invited as a whole class and in small groups to:

- create model settings on the board given a particular problem
- change dialogue to the correct tense
- carefully word segments of text so that the main character's decision was clearly defined
- decide upon a range of endings that would give the reader a fair chance of solving the problem.

These exercises were never long, tedious projects and most children were given the chance to participate. The idea was to involve all language modes and not just writing.

A joint story was then roughed up on the board with the aid of a pyramid diagram, like the one opposite, designed to make planning easier and also to assist with internalisation of the overall structure. Again the children provided most of the input, but appropriate guidance was given when they got off the track.

I gave a demonstration of how to write out a draft from the planner using an overhead projector. Page one and another page were chosen to show the



children how to put meat on the bones, and they then completed the board story on the board.

Next they were asked to write their own story, and this time they were given their own planning sheet. After I had checked the plan, a draft was written. The quality of most of the stories was excellent, and very few children had difficulties. Those that did could quickly be put on the right track.

The planning sheet only provided opportunity for four endings. Some children immediately sought permission to structure their own stories, and some adventures were more than twenty pages long, with quite sophisticated structures. Here is a page from one child's story as an example.

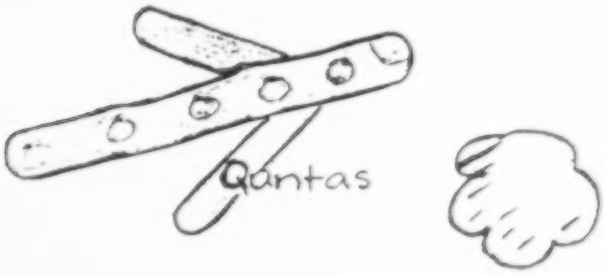
page 3

You decide to go to Spain. The next morning you leave Australia on Qantas.

You think that maybe your parents were right.

You have lots of fun in Spain and go to lots of places like the zoo and the fun park and you enjoy yourself.

Your grandma also buys you lots of dolls but you are curious to know if there are horses in Spain.



If you decide to ask your parents about it, turn to page 5.

If you decide not to bother, turn to page 4.

Conclusion

Writing is a very special activity which is valued highly by society. Because of this we need to pay special attention to it in the primary school. To focus on the genres of children's writing means that some control is taken from the hands of the children and placed back with the teacher. However, in the long run it means that children will have greater control of their writing.

I hope that some of the ideas put forward in this chapter will be helpful to teachers and their children as they attempt to come to terms with the complexities of writing.

8

Dallas Tonkin

WORKING WITH FACTUAL WRITING IN YEAR 5

In the upper primary class there is clearly a need to develop children's ability in the genres of factual writing. Many areas of the curriculum provide opportunities for factual writing and Dallas Tonkin has made the most of them in working with her Year 5 class. In this chapter she discusses how she came to build these insights into her whole language classroom and offers suggestions which other teachers can follow. She also provides further examples of the main factual genres.

The past six years have seen enormous changes in how we teach children to write, with Donald Graves's process-conference approach being widely and rapidly accepted as the method to be implemented in infants and primary classrooms. Here at last was an approach which allowed children to progress individually, and learn about different aspects of writing as they were able to understand them. The notion of choosing one's own topic led to many interesting and varied texts. In my own classroom we have shared real-life experiences that made us laugh or gasp in surprise, and these experiences have proved to be a stimulus for other children's writing. The children in my classes have also loved having their material published, or publishing it themselves.

Here, then, was an approach which seemed to cater for all children. More recently, however, I have become familiar with the research being done by Joan Rothery and Jim Martin and have come to look more closely at the process approach. It gives plenty of emphasis to the process of writing itself — drafting, revising, editing, publishing and other steps necessary in teaching children to write — but not so much attention to the types of writing produced by pupils. We may have been teaching children to write by writing, but teaching them to write . . . what?

Many children's writing is influenced by their reading, and many working within a literature-based reading program listen to and read a large amount of Narrative material. This encourages Narrative writing, though not all children move successfully from Recount to Narrative. Martin (1984, p.40) and Rothery (1985, p.76) claim that while some children do this by simply internalising Narrative structure, others need to be made aware of this underlying structure before they are capable of producing such texts.

I feel we have a responsibility as teachers to maximise every child's writing potential by making explicit not only Narrative structure but also the structures that are found in other genres, particularly the factual genres. The importance of factual writing has not been emphasised in the infants/primary years because writing, in many cases, is still considered a separate subject, rather than a means of expressing oneself in any subject area.

Making structures explicit implies intervention and that may seem to be out of step with the process approach, but it is not necessarily so. In fact teachers are intervening almost all the time in any classroom, because we cannot help but place our own values on a child's writing. When we make suggestions to improve its quality, I do not believe that we are taking away the child's ownership of the text. Suggesting improvements is a normal part of conferencing. Most children as they learn to write need to be shown something of how our language works, and to give children a more rounded perspective of writing, the classroom writing program should include a focus on genres as part of the process approach.

Such a program would see writing activities being planned across the curriculum areas. These might include describing the Procedure and results in a Science lesson or writing a Report on a Social Studies topic. A discussion of current affairs leading to children writing their understandings of the issues involved would introduce them to the Explanation and Exposition genres. How then should we structure a writing program that caters for the children in our care?

How I went about teaching factual writing

During the remainder of this chapter, I will try to describe the kind of work I have been doing with the children in my Year 5 classes over the past two years. I will concentrate mainly on factual writing, although Narrative naturally plays an important part in my program. For the most part I have been feeling my way, and I am still to find an answer to the question, 'What proportion of the writing should be prescribed?'

The procedure which I follow is this. I still use the steps of the process approach for all my pupils' writing, with one great difference: the topic usually arises from the context of, for example, Science or Social Studies. Once the topic is decided we usually discuss the kind of writing appropriate for it and its purpose. This is after extensive oral work, reading or other experiences of the topic. Further steps are illustrated in the photographs on the facing page.

After the joint text is completed, the children are asked to write their own. During the writing session I usually have certain children read their texts

Show the children published models, including those they may be familiar with (reference books, cookbooks, etc.).

The joint construction of text is a most powerful way of modelling; here Dallas Tonkin scribes her class's text.

aloud, which provides valuable models for the class and encouragement for the readers. When they have completed a draft, the children follow these steps.

1 Read the writing aloud to check that it conveys the intended meaning.
2 Circle words that may be misspelt (for personal spelling lists).
3 Read the writing to a partner who may make suggestions about its suitability.
4 Conference with me. At this stage, if the writing is to be published, a long conference will take place to help children with editing and proofreading. Otherwise, I listen to the writing for its meaning and talk to the children about their ideas.
5 Make any further changes to the writing that may be necessary.
6 Prepare for publishing — this may include writing a fresh copy.

Teacher-prescribed writing almost always has a program link, otherwise it would be just a meaningless exercise. Writing must be seen as worthwhile, and so the input prior to the writing session is very important. Children can hardly be expected to write in a particular factual genre if they have had little or no experience of the topic.

Programming

I have already indicated my belief that a conscious attempt needs to be made to structure one's program so as to allow the children to encounter writing in various genres. It is easy enough to plan narrative writing (including Recount and Observation/Comment) on the basis of a class language program. I have also found that with a little thought and imagination it is not difficult to include factual writing experiences — you may even be doing so already without thinking of them in terms of genre. As I am programming, I do not keep a checklist to remind me how many pieces of writing belonging to the various genres I have set. However, I do attempt to plan writing activities covering a range of genres that children can approach enthusiastically and with some degree of confidence.

There is a kind of hierarchy within the factual genres, as some seem to be mastered much sooner than others. I would begin with the Procedure. Of the five factual genres I have taught it is the closest to spoken language. We find this kind of language in 'How to . . .' books, cookbooks, etc, and it is writing with which young children can feel quite comfortable. Procedural texts often use linking words such as *firstly*, *then*, *next*.

This kind of writing is useful for noting observations from Science lessons, but can be used in many other areas. Here are some examples.

Describe how you get from your house to school. (Social Studies)

You're an expert fisherman. Tell me how to go about fishing. (Language)

Try and create the brew that Thalia should have made. (Literature: *Thalia the Failure* by Robin Klein)

The method section of one version of Thalia's brew devised in my classroom read as follows.

> *Chop the gut of the frog and spoon it in the cauldron. Throw in the cat's paw. With the unicorn take the feathers off. Throw them in too. Slice the lizard leg finely. Throw in the strand of hair. Cut the tail in thin slices, then chop the rat up. Then say: 'Stew, stew, turn into my Brew!' and wave your hands.*

Description is another of the factual genres and involves describing something in specific terms. There are many subject areas where this kind of writing can be introduced. Here are some examples.

> Describe a character from the book you are reading. (Literature)
>
> Write a description of the creature you found for study in the playground. (Science)
>
> Write about the first houses built at Sydney Cove. (Social Studies unit, based on excursion to Old Sydney Town)
>
> Create your own mythical creature and describe it. (Language unit: 'Magical and Mythical Beasts')

The following text is an example of a Description of a mythical beast.

Orga is my creature he is quarter lion and 3 quarters dragon. He has scales and claws and is the size of a shark. Orga eats fish, cats, dogs, kangaroos and lizards. He lives under ground and sometimes in caves in the desert. In the winter he hibernates. He sounds like a tiger and moves slowly like a turtle. He walks around the desert roaring and eating

Report, the next genre, is very close to Description, but involves writing in general terms about a topic. Writing of this type is usually found in Science and Social Studies. It can be developed from a child's own knowledge of a particular topic (e.g. cars) or can be researched from non-fiction texts. Teaching children to write successful Reports based on reference books is often difficult because they tend to regurgitate great slabs of text without knowing what they have written. (This is often the case with projects set as homework.) Teaching children how to read factual texts and how to use them for research is generally the first step in teaching them how to write Reports.

Although I will not detail specific activities here because the Report genre is the subject of Chapter 6, I include one example as a record of the understandings gained after a Science unit on 'Fibres'.

Fibres

Fibres are fine, thread-like materials. They can be natural or synthetic. Wool is natural and comes from a lamb or sheep. Cotton is also natural and comes on a plant. Jute is natural it also comes from a plant.

Some synthetic things are nylon and polyester. Polyester is on things like parkers and some bags are made out of polyester. Nylon is used for water proof things like rain coats, umbrellas and tents. Fibres are either woven or twisted so they stay together.

An Explanation is a text in which the writer states reasons for a particular phenomenon or judgement. This type of text is less likely to be found in primary classrooms, partly because of the lack of suitable published models and partly because many teachers have not set up situations which require children to write in this genre. I have attempted it only on a few occasions but have been pleased with the results, as they often give me insights into my pupils' thoughts.

Control of these texts depends on how well the writer has organised his or her ideas into logical steps. The examples below are from a Language theme on 'Childhood', using A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* as a stimulus. The writing began as a class discussion on the topic, 'Childhood days are the best days of your life. Do you agree or disagree?' These are two of the results.

Childhood Days

I disagree that childhood days are the best days of my life. Because when I get older I would like a car. I would be able to get in the Canterbury club with my dad. I can go anywhere I want without telling my mum all the time and I can go out to the beach with my friends and go swimming. But when I'm older I will not have to go to school. I'm not locked in the house all the time. But I will have to find a job. I can't wait till I get older.

Childhood

I agree that childhood days are the best days of your life. But I also think that it would be good to be an adult. For instance when you're older you have to go out and find a job to pay bills and support a family. On the other hand when you are older you have a lot of freedom to do whatever you want. When you're younger you don't have the responsibilities of cooking and cleaning or looking after a family. But you also get bossed around a lot and you aren't allowed to do the things that you want to do. I think I would like the age of 14 or 15. What do you think?

Many of the children had to be encouraged into making a judgement about the subject before they could begin writing. From there it was a matter of organising reasons. Linking words suggested to the children and found in the more successful texts were: *because, but, for instance* and *on the other hand.*

A more fully developed Explanation is called an Exposition. This is highest in the hierarchy of factual genres, and is not often found in the primary school. Usually the issue requires a lengthy justification as it is more socially significant. This type of text is required of students in their second-

ary years, along with the others I have described, and so it's undoubtedly beneficial for them to encounter it *before* they are required to use it.

The text below and the one reproduced on p. 20 were written in response to a newspaper article which stated that pupils in special education units could be integrated into regular classes. As there are support classes for intellectually handicapped children in our school, I was interested to know the thoughts of my pupils. We talked about the issue before I asked the children to put their thoughts in writing.

> *I do think the children in special units should be integrated into everyday classes. They could learn how to do the activities and things we do. It might be hard at first but once they get used to it it won't be and they could learn something they didn't know.*

These texts were the first the children had attempted as Exposition. Some were well developed and showed the writers had a grasp of the genre, while others were not so competent. However, one thing is certain: with more experience all pupils can improve their skills in the writing of expository texts.

Conclusion

While the texts shown here are only few in number, I hope that they have given you some idea of what young children can do. I never fail to be pleasantly surprised as children demonstrate their capabilities in writing — too often we underestimate them.

I believe that it is necessary to keep in mind that as we teach children to write, we are equipping them with a skill that is used lifelong. If our pupils write only in the Narrative genre, how will they gain experience of the range of genres which they will need later on? Surely, as teachers, we have no alternative but to provide our pupils with writing skills that will serve them in their future: at school, in the workforce — and in their private lives.

9

Lorraine Rowles

PROVIDING A BALANCE

In the preceding chapters you have been able to see how teachers have worked with specific genres. In this chapter Lorraine Rowles describes how she organises her classroom and how she programs that part of the day when the central focus is on language and literature. This illustrates one way in which a genre focus can be integrated into a process approach. It will be clear from Lorraine's account how she uses a wide range of resources for the children's learning and literacy development, not just in this 'language block', but potentially throughout the day.

We are also able to see Lorraine at work through the eyes of an observer, Jennifer Hammond, who takes us into the classroom and comments on how Lorraine's understanding of the genres and structures of writing is used with all the other resources of the reading-writing classroom for helping the children develop their literacy.

As the 1987 school year unfolded and I began considering my new Year 3 class, I sat down to write another Language Plan — not necessarily a new one but another reworking of 1986's, 1985's, 1984's, etc, etc. So, when invited to contribute this chapter, I was extremely hesitant, imagining that next year, 1988, I'd have discovered a better plan and would be looking back at the previous years' plans with dissatisfaction. For I've come to realise that my teaching practice is an incredible conglomeration of many and varied child-centred experiences in teaching, learning and reading, and that the children I encounter and the experiences that present themselves are dynamic in nature, constantly growing and changing.

It's difficult for me to isolate particular influences through the years; however, some are memorable and significant — especially as they seem to have arrived at crucial times in the process of my teaching. As I look back, I can see that my present theoretical position has been a long while in the making. What began as an interest in how children best learn language has developed into a much wider understanding of how successful learning takes place in

general. As far as I can remember, the first 'contact' that challenged and stimulated my thinking about language learning was with Donald Graves in Sydney and the process approach to writing. This approach introduced to me many notions that still pervade much of my classroom practice. In particular, it exposed me to the view of writing which encourages children to experience the interactive and recursive processes of rehearsing, drafting, writing, revising, editing, sharing and getting responses from 'real' audiences. It alerted me to the need to allocate ample time on a regular, daily basis for children to experience writing and the need to provide opportunities for children to conference and share their efforts at controlling the language process.

Over the last six years the early understandings that I had about the process of writing have been further developed and promoted in a very supportive and professional school environment. In this I have been extremely fortunate, as I have experienced the positive encouragement and enrichment possible when the school executive shares the same convictions about language learning. In a practical sense this school environment has provided frequent opportunities for discussion, inter-school and intra-school sharing of ideas and practices, visits from speakers in the field, viewing of videos and films, encouragement to attend inservice and regional meetings, etc.

My recent involvement in study at Wollongong University's Centre for Literacy has also had a considerable influence on my thinking. It was here that I learned about Brian Cambourne's natural learning theory and his identified conditions for successful learning. About this time, through the work of Jennifer Hammond, I also became aware of the concept of 'genre' and the need to model expository as well as narrative texts with children.

My university studies were a catalyst for me to clarify and refine my beliefs and I began examining my own theory of language learning. Its premise was that 'language equals meaning' — that is, that to know a language implies the ability to create meaning and also to understand the meaning that others create. I had become convinced that language is inseparable from its particular contexts and that language learners need to work with real texts — authentic texts, spoken or written. For me, it had become important to recreate in the classroom the conditions of learning identified by Brian Cambourne (Butler & Turbill 1984, pp. 6-9) that make language learning in the oral mode successful. These provide the optimum setting for all kinds of language learning to take place: for example, learning to read, learning to speak another language, learning to write.

At the same time, I was developing at university an awareness of the notion of 'genre' and I felt it was an aspect of language learning that could be built into my evolving language theory and practices. I was aware of a need to provide more explicit demonstrations of different types of text from time to time in language sessions. What I wanted to do in my classroom was not to pursue definitions of genre in a narrow literary sense but to encourage the children's understanding of written and spoken genres in a wider sense. This would include the ideas that:

- there are many different genres or forms of writing and speaking

- it is important to know about and appreciate different genres
- these genres are organised and constructed in different ways.

I set about immersing the children in literature from different genres, demonstrating to them from literature how different genres are organised, modelling ways to construct language in different written and spoken genres and giving explicit responses about individual attempts to construct successful texts in different genres.

All of these 'external' interactions have helped me over the years to build up a conceptual framework which I have been able to adjust as I've perceived inconsistencies within it, and to expand as my understandings have grown and developed. The transfer of this theory into classroom practice has evolved continuously. Process writing first awakened me to the 'interrelatedness' of reading and writing, but I still had concerns about the other 'segments' of language that had to be attended to — handwriting, spelling, etc. I was thinking 'whole' but felt that in many cases I was still teaching language in 'parts'. I began programming language in 'chunks' of time, trying to run different aspects of language into each other, but still felt that my programming and teaching were too compartmentalised. Language learning was not to be considered as broken into discrete parts, e.g. reading, listening, etc, or further as phonics, grammar, etc, but as an interrelated whole. I felt that by beginning with an interrelated whole session it would be possible and meaningful to focus more explicitly on specific needs as they arose — that is, to move meaningfully from whole to part.

Then, just as I was rethinking my Language Plan yet again, I read an article by Hazel Brown of Balarang Primary School on 'Organising Space and Materials' in the PETA book *Getting It Together* (1986). I was reading many publications at the time but none excited me as this one did — it seemed to provide a firm direction to what I'd only been thinking about and experimenting with. Someone else had found a credible way to marry together all the components of language into a meaningful, workable whole. Again, an encouraging school executive came forward to arrange visits to Hazel Brown's classroom and organise further reading and in-school development. On a personal level, it was a very enriching experience — that of sharing in another teacher's practices and insights.

All this experience and reflection has enabled me to develop the approach to language which is outlined here.

A WHOLE LANGUAGE PLAN

How is the classroom organised?

Space

The way in which classroom space is organised is vital to the successful implementation of a workable whole language plan. Although furniture and

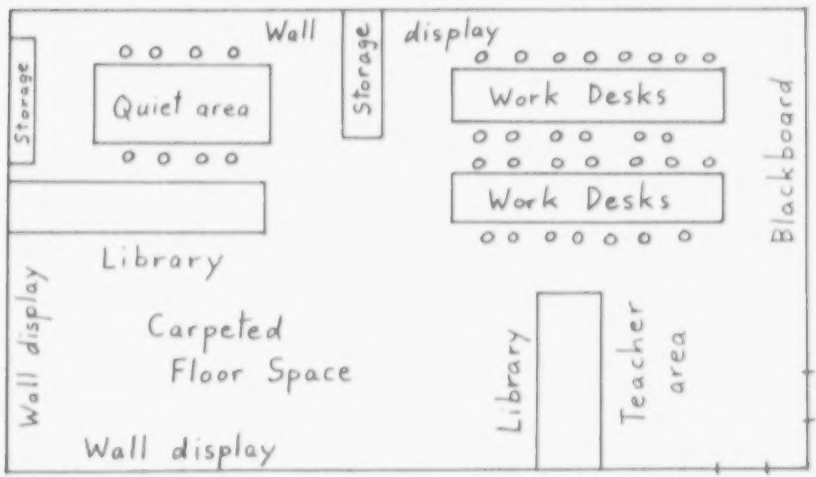
seating are often rearranged within my classroom, the essential organisational elements remain the same, viz —

Working Desk Area with desks grouped in view of the blackboard.

Carpeted Floor Space large enough for whole class sharing sessions.

Teacher Area where the teacher can withdraw for observation, or children and teacher can conference/discuss, etc.

Areas for Display/Storage of class library/children's record-keeping devices, e.g. folders, logs, etc./scissors, paper, glue, etc. The area for displaying the class library needs to be extensive to house bulk loans from the school library. Library materials may be organised into fiction/non-fiction and under favourite authors, into poetry collections, magazines, dictionaries, atlases, taped stories, skinny books, child-made books, newspapers, etc.



Example of classroom organisation

Print

There needs to be heaps of good-quality print on walls, windows and doors or hanging from ceilings, etc. This print may include labelled art and craft, Science and Social Studies reports, experiments, vocabulary lists, maths facts and problems, signs, posters, children's narrative and expository writing, directions, author studies, classroom charts (indicating contract progress, conference schedules), modelled and co-operative texts (such as reports, letters, etc.), class books, graphs, surveys, rules, etc.

Class members need to be as active as possible in contributing both to class libraries (by choosing books, etc.) and to environmental print (by engaging in print walks with teacher or classmates). Room print needs to be organised so that children know where it is and can revisit items when they need to.

Other resources

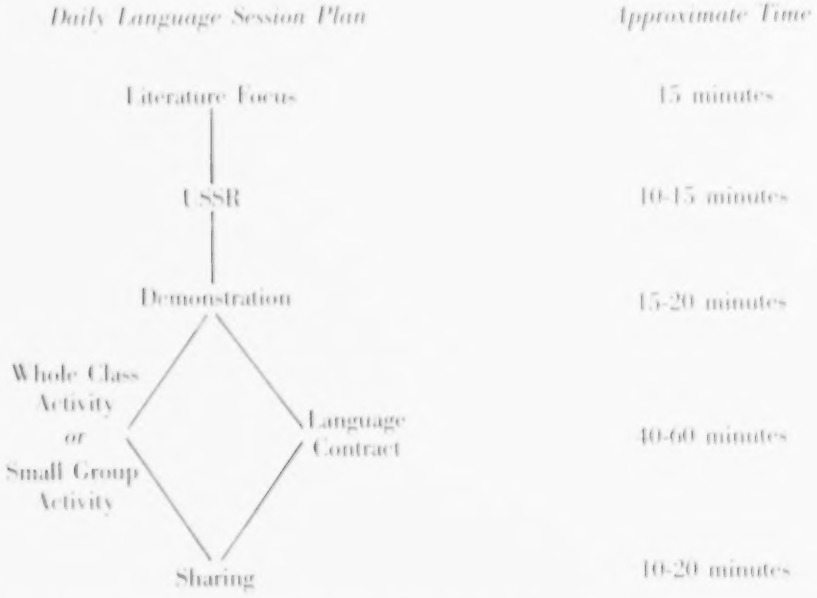
Besides print, the children need other easily located resources for making their own books and print displays, i.e. lots of paper (scrap, blank, lined, coloured and of different shapes and sizes), cardboard, scissors, glue, rulers, textas, pencils, staplers, hole-punchers, string, tape, etc.

Library

If possible, individuals should have open access at all times to the school library to exchange personal loans, research, discuss selections with the librarian and generally enjoy the library.

How are language sessions organised?

Chunks of time need to be organised on the timetable for daily block language sessions of approximately two hours. These can be at any time in the day but should be at the same time every day.



At times, if unusual circumstances intervene, it is possible to rearrange or omit components of this language plan to suit them.

Literature Focus

This specific literature focus aims to expose children to as wide a range of literature as possible in a balanced and systematic way. In each session literature from a different genre is presented: e.g. serialised novels, plays, poetry,

non-fiction books, picture books, newspaper reports, non-fiction reports from magazines, etc. The literature presented is recorded in categories in the teacher's program so as to provide a specific balance between fiction and non-fiction.

This part of the session usually takes the form of teacher reading and the children are expected to listen, enjoy and respond. The literature input is designed to 'set the mood' for each day's language session and is often the theme for other activities that follow. For example, literature presented in the day's focus may be the basis for the demonstration, whole class activity or small group activity.

Literature presented is often thematically linked to other curriculum areas being studied at the time. For example:

Storm Boy by Colin Thiele
Who Sank the Boat? by Pamela Allen
Conservation Report, *Habitat* magazine
} presented during a Science unit on Water.

The themes of other curriculum areas are the most obvious vehicles for presenting the non-fiction literature strand. Literature time also gives an excellent opportunity to look at some cross-curriculum perspectives, e.g. Aboriginal and environmental perspectives in *Storm Boy*.

The literature focus can also be taken by the librarian, ESL teacher or a guest speaker, e.g. an Aboriginal storyteller.

USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading)

The purpose of this phase of the session is for the children to engage for a time in absolutely silent reading. Children can read material from the genre of their choice, often their 'favourite' genre, and they are expected to select material that will occupy them for at least ten minutes. If possible, everyone present in the classroom reads, including the teacher and any visitors. Children can choose to sit wherever they wish and read whatever they like in a relaxing atmosphere. The ten minutes can be gradually increased.

Demonstration

The purpose of the demonstration is for teacher and class to become involved in a specific aspect of language learning. The simplest interpretation of this phase may be as the 'how to' time, when children and teacher explore more explicitly different aspects of language. Each day a different language issue, based on the perceived needs of the children, is attended to; e.g. vocabulary treatment, editing skills or group modelling of a Science report. It is important to note here that 'group perceived needs' are often those that may arise from writing demands in other curriculum areas. Language contract demands may also require whole class demonstration, particularly of writing for different purposes — e.g. letter writing of various types, reporting about books read, etc.

It is important to provide a balanced range of demonstrations from both fiction and non-fiction sources and of narrative and factual writing.

Whole Class Activity

The function of this activity is to provide a flow-on from whole class demonstrations when necessary. At times it is vital because it gives the children opportunities to do themselves what has just been demonstrated to them. For example:

- A demonstration may have involved looking closely at a non-fiction report read during the literature focus, then the class construction of a non-fiction report (from a current Science or Social Studies theme).

  The whole class activity that follows might involve all children in drafting individual non-fiction reports. (These reports could later be revised and developed during language contract time as a contract requirement.)

- The demonstration may involve the teacher and class in finding ways to select a topic for a piece of narrative writing (brainstorming, peer discussions, sharing, listing, etc.).

  In the whole class activity that follows children will be keen to write, and it may be appropriate to have a whole class 'write-in' when everyone sits down and writes, with the emphasis on quick drafting and sharing while new topics are still fresh in mind.

Other examples of whole class activities are reading activities, such as retelling, sequencing or big cloze, class-negotiated texts such as reports, writing up Science experiments, letters or dramatic productions.

Small Group Activity

This aspect of the language session is both useful and necessary at times. It is necessary as a type of monitoring device which allows the teacher to tap briefly into what each child is doing and how he/she is doing it (e.g. checking their personal record keeping). It is useful in that it gives the children and teacher an opportunity to engage in activities that lend themselves specifically to small groups (e.g. oral retellings, dramatisations, group discussion and construction of a report, group sequencing of the events in a narrative, and communicative activities).

The groups are organised with even numbers (normally six) to make paired activities easy. They are usually chosen down the alphabetical class list and contain a range of abilities. Small group activities are not included every week; in the course of a five-week contract they might be organised twice (e.g. the second and fourth week of the contract). If I decide to include a small group activity, it operates for the whole week: i.e. Group 1 meets me on Monday, Group 2 on Tuesday and so on, engaging in the same activities. Activities presented are based on perceived needs.

Language Contracts

The purpose of the language contract phase of the session is to give the children time to pursue through active inquiry, discovery and organisation their own needs and interests within the overall parameters of the language contract (see below). Contracts are organised to encourage individual engage-

ment in a balanced range of language tasks over time. 'Balanced' here refers particularly to expectations that the children will read fiction and non-fiction and write in narrative and expository genres. The contract is often a vehicle for fulfilling writing demands across other curriculum areas, e.g. writing a report on an excursion, a science experiment or a piece of research.

During contract time children have the freedom to organise and attend to contract tasks at their own discretion. Except for occasional short periods when the teacher may be involved in a small group activity, she can rove and make herself available for individual or small group reading and writing conferences. The language contract lasts about five weeks and can vary in content each time. Language contract expectations are set at the minimum: i.e. if the set expectation is to read one novel, an individual can read more than one. Classroom charts show how far children have gone towards completing their contracts.

Contract requirements may include items such as:

- producing a piece of published narrative writing (including drafts)
- reading a novel or a number of short stories
- reporting about a novel or short story (e.g. written retelling, story skeleton)
- producing a published report (including drafts) based on Science or Social Studies units
- completing weekly handwriting practice sheets
- writing up a Science report
- completing a research sheet
- completing specified poetry or vocabulary activities.

Sharing

This time is intended as a whole class sharing session. Anyone may contribute on issues that arise from the language session and contract progress, or individuals may share some aspects of their language work, e.g. read a piece of writing or discuss a book read. During these sessions, which occur roughly twice a week, the teacher may draw attention to significant language issues as well.

How do I program all this?

Well, most of what you have read so far comes directly from my classroom program: that is, the beliefs about language learning, the classroom conditions, the session format, the times and definitions of what I do and when I do it. However, the actual content of my daily language sessions tends to be spontaneous, while preserving continuity from day to day.

A recent development which has proved useful from a programming point of view has been the introduction of Language Overview Sheets. These sheets were drawn up in collaboration with Lyn White, another teacher on the same grade, as a response to our concerns about better organisation of our whole language programs. Whole language teaching is by nature not

highly sequenced or pre-planned, and so these overview sheets are not intended for that purpose. Instead they are meant to be kept as ongoing records, providing insights into areas visited and those that will need revisiting, and possibly offering opportunities for the teacher to provide more balanced and extensive experiences to her class.

As well as these overviews, my language program records expand some aspects of the session where I feel it is necessary to have more detail (e.g. literature presented throughout the year is further listed and categorised in different genres). Demonstrations, small group activities and whole class activities presented during the year are listed along with details of the strategies used to implement them.

How is all this evaluated?

Evaluation for this whole language plan tends to combine data collected by teacher and pupil about each individual's ongoing language development. Items of evaluation may include the following.

- Teacher-collected anecdotal notes for each child taken at individual and group reading/writing conferences, activity sessions and group sharing sessions.
- Samples of dated draft and published writing stored in writing folders.
- Reading Attitude/Interview Sheets developed for readers as the need arises (e.g. for "at risk" readers).
- Records/samples are sometimes kept of individual performance in different language strategies presented, e.g. written retellings, big cloze or editing skills (such as proofreading for spelling).
- The children keep ongoing, dated, reading and writing records (logs). These records must accompany them to conferences with the teacher.

Published Writing Log

Title	Type of Writing	Date
At Noosa Heads	Narrative (Personal)	15.2.86
My Cat	Poem	27.2.86
Mushrooms	Report	5.4.86
The Lost Island	Narrative	21.5.86
A Letter to my Penpal	Letter	1.6.86.
Science Experiment	Report	10.0.86
The B.F.G. by Roald Dahl	Book Review	7.7.86
My Secret Place	Narrative (Personal)	28.7.87
Story Skeleton "Hating Alison Ashley"	Story Skeleton	27.8.87.

Week: 2	WEEKLY LANGUAGE OVERVIEW					
Daily Session	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Evaluation Comments
Focus	Class Serialised Novel 'Storm Boy' by Colin Thiele	Non-fiction reading extracts 'Our People' Series	Fable 'The Lion and the Rat' by La Fontaine Illustrator: Brian Wildsmith	Poetry Selections from Spike Milligan's Millianimals Roald Dahl's Dirty Beasts	Picture Book 'The Useless Donkeys' Lydia Pender	Everyone is particularly 'taken' with 'Storm Boy' and we have been reading it often in class breaks etc.
U.S.S.R.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Jane and David still having some problems settling at silent reading time.
Demonstration	Writing: Topics Brainstorm • Listing individually things we know a lot about. • Partner Activities Talking about ideas for individual lists	Modelled Report Writing • What types of food did traditional Aboriginals eat?		Handwriting Whole Class Demonstration 'Joining from an upstroke'	Vocabulary Work using 'Storm Boy' and 'The Useless Donkeys' Finding, listing, using dictionaries, discussing function, meaning, spelling	Writing: Topics Brainstorm has given most children some good starters for writing.
Whole Class Activity or Small Group Activity	Whole Class "Write-in" 'Narrative' N/A	Whole Class draft individual reports on above topic N/A	Whole Class Written Retelling using Cambourne's developed strategies N/A	Short Whole class handwriting session: 'Joining from an upstroke' o e c N/A	of adjectives from these books. Making "Descriptive Words" wall charts. Relate to children's writing. N/A	Some very interesting outcomes from the retelling (Wed.) – see individual evaluation profiles. No Small Group activity this week
Language Contract	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Most children have settled very well into their contracts.
Sharing	✓				✓	

Book Log

Book Title	Author	Date Started / Date Finished	Value Line	Type of Book
		13.2.86	1 2 3 (4) 5	
The Magic Finger	Roald Dahl	1.3.86		Fiction
		4.3.86	1 2 3 (4) 5	
The Twits	Roald Dahl	19.3.86		Fiction
		21.3.86	1 2 3 4 (5)	
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	Judy Blume	15.4.86		Fiction
		18.4.86	1 2 3 4 (5)	
People of the Murray River	Methuen	25.4.86		Non-fiction
		28.4.86	1 2 3 4 (5)	
The B.F.G.	Roald Dahl	20.5.86		Fiction
		22.5.86	1 2 3 (4) 5	
Superfudge	Judy Blume	30.6.86		Fiction
		3.7.86	1 2 3 (4) 5	
Australian Habitats Woodlands	Alan Fairley	10.7.86		Non-Fiction
		19.7.86	1 2 (3) 4 5	
Moths and Caterpillars	Densey Clyne	1.8.86		Non-Fiction
			1 2 3 4 5	
			1 2 3 4 5	
			1 2 3 4 5	
			1 2 3 4 5	

Conclusions

Once language learners

> are familiar with the organisational pattern of this type of whole language session,
>
> understand the demands of contract-based language activities and all that they entail, e.g. self-selection, self-pacing, individual record-keeping, etc, and
>
> can function according to the ground rules developed in collaboration with their teachers and peers,

the outcomes are encouraging, exciting and often dramatic. Teachers and children who experience the liberation of this type of learning environment can't help but become committed to it.

Observers quickly notice growth in individual levels of self-esteem as children develop a better concept of themselves as competent language users and accept more autonomous responsibility for their own learning. An increased 'caringness' for one another is obvious amongst learners. Class tone is wonderful, negativism and competitiveness have been minimised and everyone is taking risks!

THE OBSERVER IN THE CLASSROOM

Jennifer Hammond

In 1986 I spent one morning each week observing Lorraine's Year 3 class during their daily language session. I recorded the interaction that occurred between teacher and children, and I collected copies of the texts that the children wrote. I found the experience of being a classroom observer quite fascinating.

The first thing that struck me about Lorraine's classroom was its physical appearance. The room itself was in an old building and had none of the attractive features of newer school architecture. It had four walls and a blackboard and little else. It had no carpet, so that every time a chair moved the noise reverberated around the room. Despite this, it had an exciting and appealing look. The furniture was arranged so that different sections of the room could be used for different purposes. A lot of texts written by children were on display, organised into sections on research work, book reviews, narratives, etc. There were a number of large charts stuck onto walls, listing procedures that had been discussed in class at various stages. These included 'Ways to Report on a Book', 'Our Writing Process' and 'Research Writing'. A large section of one wall was devoted to work based on a book that the class had recently read. During the time I spent in the room, the 'procedures' remained on the wall and the children often referred to them. The other materials changed frequently.

I think the second thing that struck me about Lorraine's room was its smooth functioning. Although the children were frequently engaged in a whole range of different things, each child clearly knew what he or she was doing, and knew what was expected. At times this involved shared time with the whole class; at other times children worked individually or in small groups. The class atmosphere was one of co-operation and support. The children were relaxed and enthusiastic, and obviously enjoyed being part of the class.

It seemed to me that the reason why the whole language session worked so well was that it was very thoroughly organised — the routines were well established, yet they allowed each child considerable personal freedom and responsibility. The organisation itself was flexible enough to accommodate needs and interests and the inevitable disruptions that are part of any school. The flexibility also meant that the children who worked best on their own were able to do so, while those who needed more guidance had a clear framework to support them. Lorraine's system of record keeping and evaluation meant that she had a very clear profile of each child — she was aware of where each child's strengths and interests lay, and also of where they needed assistance and guidance.

Language for talking about language

After the initial impression, the next thing that I began to be aware of in this class was the ongoing development of a language for talking about language. It was largely unobtrusive, but occurred throughout the language session as the occasion arose or as the situation demanded. It reflected Lorraine's own explicit understanding of language, language development, the concept of genres and the teaching of reading and writing. The significance of this language for talking about language was that it allowed teacher and children to reflect on, and discuss in a fairly explicit way, what they were reading and what they were writing. I felt that this, along with the classroom organisation which supported it, was the most important feature of what was going on in the classroom. It had an impact on everything the children did. It was central to the literature input with which each session began, to the conferences that occurred between teacher and child, and to the whole class demonstration.

The literature input session began with Lorraine explaining what she was about to read — for example, an extract from a novel, a short story, some factual material, etc. She discussed the appearance of the book, its setting out, the relationship of text to diagram, the illustrations, etc. She commented on the author, and referred to other books by the same author, or similar books by other authors and so on. The children participated in this discussion, offering their own observations and comparisons. As she read, Lorraine commented on, and invited discussion not only of words and sentences, of setting out and punctuation, but also of overall text structure. For example, on some occasions she discussed how an author had begun a particular book; on other occasions she commented on ways of organising information, or of ending a text. As she did so, she frequently related these points to texts that individual children were working on, with the suggestion that the child might find such a technique or idea useful in his or her own writing. These discussions included the terms *narrative*, *legend*, *report*, etc, to refer to different types of writing. They also included *introduction* or *scene setting*, *main happening* and *resolution* to refer to the stages of a Narrative, and *general statement* and *detailed information*, or *body*, to refer to the stages of a Report. These terms had all been introduced and explained to the children during previous demonstrations and were part of the class vocabulary. The children used them quite comfortably when discussing books they were reading, or their own and other children's writing.

Beginning with literature

Perhaps an additional comment needs to be made about the literature input session. I believe it was significant that each school day began with a focus on literature which, as Lorraine has stressed, included both factual and narrative texts. In our culture we normally do first what we regard as most important. The message that the children in this class received was that literature (and hence writing) is vitally important and worthy of serious study and discussion.

Beginning a piece can be difficult, but having a clear idea of your purpose and how to organise your text does help.

The language of conferencing

The use of language for talking about language was a significant part of the conferencing that occurred between teacher and child. Much of the discussion of the children's written texts revolved initially around the purpose of the text, and then around the organisation required to achieve that purpose. This frequently entailed looking at a text to see whether or not it was sufficiently explicit, and the sorts of questions Lorraine asked were these.

> Is there enough detail provided to make time and place settings clear?
>
> Is it clear who the participants are, and what are their relationships to each other?
>
> Is the sequence of events clear?
>
> Is it clear what the research topic is about?
>
> Is there enough information in the text?
>
> How are you going to organise the information (e.g. around specific points)?

Because the children were developing a language for talking about language, they were able to reflect on their own work and engage in a fairly explicit discussion about it with their teacher.

The other place where language for talking about language was particularly noticeable was in the daily class demonstrations. Here, depending on

the children's needs and what was going on in the classroom at the time, different aspects of text development and writing were demonstrated. Examples that I observed included ways of presenting factual writing, with special reference to the relationship between text and diagram (several factual books were consulted here for comparison); how to complete the Resolution part of Narratives (many children at that time were writing highly imaginative Narratives, but having got their characters into intricate Complications they were unable to resolve them); the use of full stops and capital letters (this was done by using one of the children's texts, with his permission, and by discussing how the meaning of the text changed when the punctuation was changed). Demonstration time was also the time when different genres were modelled and discussed. I felt this was a very important part of the ongoing writing development of the children, as it gave them an opportunity to take part in the construction of a model text. Because this model text was constructed by the whole class, it also ensured that the children saw an example of what this kind of text ought to look like.

The purpose of demonstrations

I will describe in some detail one of these genre-demonstration sessions. They occurred, depending on need, about once or twice a month. On these occasions the demonstration section of the daily plan was much longer. The flexibility that resulted from having a large chunk of the timetable set aside for Language made this possible. On subsequent days the demonstration section was shorter to balance up the other components of the language session.

The example that I will describe arose out of work that the class had been doing on traditional Aborigines. The children had spent quite a lot of time during their Social Studies lessons and language sessions discussing the lifestyle of traditional Aborigines. They had read quite a large number of books on the topic. Extracts from some of these books had been read during the literature input stage of a number of language sessions. Two Aboriginal speakers had talked to the children about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal people. In all, the children knew a lot about traditional Aboriginal people.

On the day this demonstration occurred Lorraine had written on a large sheet of chartpaper, 'What types of food did traditional Australian Aboriginals eat?' This was presented as a Science research question which the children were required to answer. The lesson began with a discussion of the meaning of the word *traditional* and of the interpretation of the question itself. The discussion then moved on to possible sources of information about traditional Aboriginal food, and the children suggested Aboriginal legends, non-fiction books, some TV programs, some films or videos, and Aboriginal visitors. Lorraine then picked out one of the non-fiction books on traditional Aboriginals available in the classroom. She discussed the 'Contents' section of the book and how that might indicate which were the appropriate pages for this research question. She also referred to the index at the back of the book, and showed how it gave information about where to look for specific

topics. She read a short section from this book and from a couple of the others available. The children then went to their seats and prepared to participate in the construction of a joint class Report on the food eaten by traditional Aboriginals. For this first draft Lorraine wrote down all suggestions that the children provided. The first draft was as follows.

Aboriginals ate kangaroos, snakes, witchety grubs and turtles.
Aboriginals usually eat seafood.
Aboriginals cooked their food on hot open fires with hot sand, coals or clay.
Aboriginals catch fish in nets at low tide.
Aboriginals hunt for their food with boomerangs.
They eat baked goanna.
Aboriginals cut holes in trees to get honey out of them to eat.
Aboriginals eat fruit like berries from trees and bushes.
Some Aboriginals eat oysters.
Aboriginals spear ducks and birds by hiding in the reeds.
Aboriginals hunt emus and snakes and eggs.
When stranded whales come to shore, Aboriginals call other groups to have a feast.
Aboriginal women dive for mussels, dig rats from their burrows.
Aboriginals spear fish. They use short spears underwater and long spears above the water.
Aboriginals use grinding stones to grind seeds to make bread and seed cakes.

Clearly this text is a rough draft. While it contains a lot of information, it is essentially a list of different sources of food, rather than a cohesive text.

After reading over this draft, Lorraine began to discuss ways of improving it with the children. She pointed out that the information was all mixed up and that in order to write a good Report this information needed to be organised. She discussed appropriate ways of beginning the second draft. In doing so, she referred back to previous discussions on Report writing, specifically those which covered the need to begin a Report with a generalised statement before getting into detailed information. The children, after some discussion, agreed on the following introduction:

Traditional Aboriginals hunt, fish and gather their food from the land.

The class then discussed how they ought to organise the rest of the information they had. Lorraine suggested using the concepts of 'hunt', 'gather' and 'fish', which were in the introductory statement, as a means of helping organise the information. The rest of this second draft ran as follows.

Aboriginal men used spears, traps, nets and boomerangs for hunting. Aboriginals spear ducks and birds by hiding in the reeds. They catch fish in nets at low tide. Aboriginals spear fish and use short spears underwater and long spears above the water.

Aboriginal women gathered berries from trees and bushes. They dived for mussels and gathered shellfish and dug rats from their burrows. They

cut toe holes in trees to get honey out of trees to eat. They eat roots from lillies.

Aboriginals cook their food on hot open fires with hot sand, coals or clay. They sometimes bake goanna. Aboriginals use grinding stones to make bread and seed cakes. When stranded whales come to shore Aboriginals call other groups to have a feast.

This draft still has room for improvement, noticeably in the way it switches from present to past tense — a reflection of the children's awareness, on the one hand, that use of the present simple tense is normally appropriate when providing factual information, and on the other hand, that this topic refers to how Aboriginal people used to live rather than how they live now. However, this second draft is clearly a great improvement on the first. It is significant that the children themselves participated in discussions about the drafting that led to this improvement. Their knowledge of Report writing is systematically being built up through experiences of this kind. They are learning how to go about gathering the necessary information and how to draft, and then redraft, in order to write a successful Report.

The construction of class models such as this one enables the children to see what a successful Report ought to look like. It is hardly surprising that when the children wrote their own Reports on 'What food did traditional Aboriginals eat?', they produced very successful texts.

All of this really works!

Having spent considerable time analysing texts the children wrote throughout the year, I can state with confidence that Lorraine's Language program has been remarkably successful. The children made significant and often dramatic progress during the year in terms of their confidence as writers, the length, complexity and structural organisation of their texts, the clarity of purpose and expression in them, and in their spelling and punctuation.

I believe the success of Lorraine's language sessions is based on her own explicit understanding of language and how language works. This understanding has been translated into a warm, supportive and very interesting classroom environment where the children are regularly and systematically exposed to a range of genres in their reading and writing, and where the focus is balanced between the process of writing and the end product, the written text. Through class models and demonstrations the children are provided with explicit information on how to construct successful texts. The ongoing development of a language for talking about language allows them to reflect on, examine and constructively experiment with oral and written language in the educational context.

10

Bill Crowley

WRITING ACROSS THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Primary teachers, especially those with upper primary classes, often think about the demands that will be placed on their pupils when they go on to secondary school. In this chapter, an experienced secondary teacher outlines some of the current uses of writing in the secondary school and the possibilities of development. This should provide primary teachers with further insight into what their students can expect. Some of the ideas in this chapter will be applicable at the primary level too. After all, as we've been at pains to show in this book, a genre focus is not merely a way of preparing for secondary writing, but a way of enriching literacy and learning at the primary level itself.

This chapter aims to acquaint the primary teacher with the varieties of writing which the secondary school student may have to cope with across a range of subjects from Years 7 to 12. I say 'may' because secondary writing demands are changing, due partly to the influence of the writing process movement and partly to the greater language awareness of some of the new subject syllabuses which have appeared in the last eight years.

I also say 'may' because, as later sections of this chapter indicate, a lot of cross-curriculum writing in Australian high schools is based on a very narrow foundation. A great deal of the writing, particularly in Years 7-10, is copied, and what is not copied is either very short (often only a phrase or a sentence) or runs along the well-worn grooves of a narrow range of fairly predictable varieties of writing. Part of the rationale for the NSW Writing K-12 Curriculum Project was to offer a solution to this disappointing aspect of secondary writing, and to support those high schools where students are

being encouraged to improve the quantity, quality and learning potential of their own writing.

I hope that what follows in this chapter will help primary teachers construct effective writing programs which take into account the needs and demands of writing which their students will face in the secondary school.

In the recently released *Writing K-12* materials (NSW Department of Education, 1987) there are two sections especially for the secondary teacher. 'Writing in the Secondary School' is concerned with setting out general principles and strategies for teachers to help students 'learn to write' in the increasingly varied and complex types of writing that are required across the curriculum in secondary schools. This document also focuses on the principles of 'writing to learn' — that is, using writing as an active means of understanding and truly assimilating the many kinds of knowledge required in the secondary curriculum.

The other secondary section of *Writing K-12* is entitled 'Writing in the Subject Areas'. It aims to provide more detailed imormation on the varieties of writing which are relevant to particular secondary subject areas. The subject area statements follow on naturally from the more general 'Writing in the Secondary School'.

All of the statements, however varied, have a common philosophy regarding the place and the importance of writing in the secondary school curriculum. Key aspects of this philosophy are these.

- Students from Year 7 onwards need to be given frequent opportunities to undertake forms of sustained writing in their various subjects. 'Sustained' can be anything from a short paragraph to a number of pages.
- For writing to fulfil its potential as a powerful means of learning it must be of the student's own composing.

  Copied writing, in certain early teaching/learning situations, may contribute eventually to the student's writing development. However, a diet which consists predominantly of copied writing, at the expense of the student's own writing, will not provide the basis for developing the writing skills necessary in the secondary school, particularly in the senior years.
- A range of writing wider than is often undertaken traditionally in subject learning could lead to greater student involvement.
- The different genres of writing are potentially useful to students in enabling them to approach subject learning from different angles or perspectives. Teachers and students need to be clearly aware of the ways by which writing in the different genres leads to different ways of organising and understanding subject content.
- Students need help to cope with the demands of language use and whole-text organisation in the various written genres. As they achieve increasing competence in writing, they gain the power to use this writing potential to maximum effect in subject learning.

❖ The actual process of writing varies in its demands and stages according to the particular subject and the teaching/learning situation in which it takes place. Intelligent and sensitive attention to the relevant stages of the writing process will be a major factor in developing the written product successfully.

Kinds of writing in some secondary subjects

The kinds of writing presented in each section of 'Writing in the Subject Areas' (*Writing K-12*) tend to fall into one of three categories:

A writing traditionally used in the subject over a long period of time

B writing being newly introduced and encouraged in recent syllabuses

C writing which would only be used by an innovative teacher but which holds great promise for productive subject learning — 'writing to learn'.

A selection of some of the varieties of writing in 'Writing in the Subject Areas' will give you some idea of the scope of the writing covered. I have chosen the secondary subjects which, besides English, traditionally involve learning within a strong language context, particularly reading and writing. I have labelled each of the varieties of writing **A**, **B** or **C** (or combination) to correspond with the categories listed above.

Commerce and Economics

Questionnaires — for interviewing people.	B
Writing a paragraph in which the main points of an interview are summed up.	B
Preparing a personal profile questionnaire and then using the information to write a report.	B
Writing economics essays.	A

Geography

Brief written responses giving reasons.	A
Longer written responses analysing stimulus material and applying other knowledge to define, assess, explain.	A
Brief written responses to questions seeking clarification of values by evaluating, explaining and interpreting.	B
Longer written responses (essays) involving: • problem solution • comparing and contrasting.	A
Writing based on an interpretation and/or analysis of a map, e.g: • composing an advertisement ('For Sale') • writing a letter to a business client • writing a short note giving directions.	B C

Writing based on an analysis of a map and requiring the presentation of a logical argument and conclusion, e.g: A

- writing a report of some length giving reasons, describing locations, balancing advantages/disadvantages, making recommendations, outlining possible benefits, indicating possible problems.

Making up a questionnaire. C

Writing a letter to the editor. C

Writing a drama script. C

History

Imaginative re-creation or reconstruction, e.g: B

- writing a speech in support of a point of view
- writing a letter to the editor supporting a point of view.

Recording (i.e. systematic collection of data from various sources), e.g: A

- listing in point form, e.g. the reasons for Hitler's rise to power
- listing in a hierarchy of importance
- note-making as a result of the listing.

Interpretation A B

(*a*) Limited prose response, e.g. for interpretation of the use of propaganda posters in W.W.I:

- 'what' — giving information from posters
- 'what similarities' — comparing/contrasting.

(*b*) Writing an essay involving an interpretation and then evaluation, e.g of the *Res Gestae* of Augustus as propaganda.

Historical narrative B C

(*a*) Writing a television script, e.g. one based on the arrest of Governor Bligh. Possible follow-ups include:

- eyewitness report
- 'what happened next'
- newspaper report
- comic strip with dialogue
- TV program notes for the completed video
- synopsis of each scene
- review of the video.

(*b*) Writing encyclopedia entries, e.g. on three generations of a student's family, based on a series of interviews.

Home Economics

Limited prose responses to factual questions. A

Graphic and pictorial representation with a brief written interpretation. A

Written plans of intended work and records of learning experiences. B

Descriptive writing — brief descriptive paragraphs based on personal observation. A

Formulating questions for surveys, interviews, questionnaires, forums, debates and case studies, and for guest speakers to speak about. B

Personal writing — journals and diaries for further learning. C

Imaginative writing, e.g: C
- designing advertisements, swing tags, labels and invitations
- writing in 'pretend-to-be' situations
- poems and drama scripts in the context of family situations, interpersonal relations and various social contacts.

Letter writing, e.g. letters addressed to media people or consumer bodies, or those required by social situations. B

Note-making and summarising, e.g. making notes from print, lectures, guest speakers and audio-visual material on given topics such as nutrition, cultural studies and fabric properties. A

Report writing, e.g: A
- writing reports to present information resulting from field studies, laboratory investigations, library research, practical experiences and seminars
- writing reports derived from observations of various kinds.

Essay writing, e.g: A B
- collecting, collating and applying information
- investigating situations and solving problems that emerge from information.

Science and Agriculture

Extended answer, e.g: A
- the equivalent of the 'essay' in Science and Agriculture
- sustained answer to a question.

Report writing — starting with personal and informal forms of reporting, and then, as students gain skills and confidence, the formal report. A B

Narrative and imaginative writing — particularly appropriate for students in junior secondary years who are 'coming to grips' with scientific concepts, facts and processes. Possible audiences for such writing include others in the class, school newspapers, notice boards and library, letters to newspapers, etc. and junior classes. B C

Writing abilities secondary students need

This section gives a more detailed look at some of the writing skills which secondary students will have to use in various subjects and which could be introduced in upper primary school, if not earlier.

Narrative

This requires ability to make the movement through time or space obvious (e.g. by deft use of verb forms and words that signal chronological order) and ability to handle the stages of the Narrative genre for maximum effect.

Description

This is often included in report writing in junior and middle secondary and requires ability to:

- use familiar spatial sequences
- select words or phrases that signal spatial relationships
- present what has been experienced through the senses in an impersonal and analytical manner
- present both 'subjective description' and 'objective description'.

Comparison/contrast

This is often included in reports in the middle secondary years and forms part or whole of many senior secondary essays.

Many things are likely to go wrong with written comparisons unless students are given a frame within which visualise the relationships among the parts of the comparison. They need help to decide what the grounds for the comparison or contrast are. They often need help to construct a comparison/contrast frame which includes points of similarity, points of difference, and illustrations of points of similarity and difference.

The typical linguistic demands of comparison/contrast are:

- handling alternating subject forms
- using comparative identity signals
- using adversative conjunctions when necessary.

As an example, consider this opening paragraph.

> The James-Bond-type spy and the western cowboy have been two of the most popular kinds of movie heroes. Both are *similar* in their love of adventure and in their fondness for and skill with weapons. Major differences are apparent, *however*, in their treatment of women and in their motivation for their actions. *The 'good' cowboy* is generally concerned with helping women in distress and in maintaining loyalty to a cause or ideal. *On the other hand, the Bond spy, although* attracted to women, is *less* concerned with their distress and is *little* motivated by any selfless sense of patriotism.

The linguistic demands of comparison/contrast have produced:

- alternating subject forms: *the 'good' cowboy, the Bond spy*
- comparative identity signals: *similar, less* concerned, *little* motivated
- adversative conjunctions: *however, on the other hand, although.*

Analysis of causes

This is the basic fare of some middle and senior secondary reports and also

of the interpretive, evaluative and argumentative essays referred to later. It requires:

- the ability of the writer to suspend certainty in order to consider probabilities and alternatives
- the use of several types of words or phrases that help to make explicit the kinds of relationships that dominate complex causal explanations.

Beyond having the vocabulary and ordering devices of causal analysis, the student needs the experience of moving into the thick of a phenomenon and discovering the difficulties that accompany any responsible attempt to account for it.

Note-making

The basic rules for summarising texts (based on Freebody 1984) are these.

Delete trivial details and redundancies (i.e. details or examples which may have their own importance but serve to reinforce the main point).

Replace a group of items with a simple term which describes their class or category.

Condense a paragraph to a topic sentence, either by selecting a sentence from the text or by writing one.

Successful note-making is founded on the student's ability to handle various combinations of these rules.

Various types of reports

The breadth of the writing demands on junior and middle secondary students can be seen in the following table which details various types of written reports.

TIME-BASED REPORTS	PARTLY TIME-BASED REPORTS	OTHER THAN TIME-BASED REPORTS
Eyewitness Report	Journalist-researched Report	Factual Report (information, description)
Biography Report	Factual Book Report	Factual, Interpretive Report
Autobiography Report	Review of a book, film, TV program or magazine	Laboratory Report
Diary Entry (or entries)	Personal Journal Entry	Personal Profile Report
Narrative Report (incidents and events)	Excursion Report (incidents, events, information, interpretation)	Summary (Precis) Report
		Project Report

Reports occupy a pivotal position in secondary school writing and, as the table indicates, they draw on features of various genres. On the one hand

there are time-based reports with information organised according to a chronological structure, with descriptive detail subservient to it. On the other hand there are reports based on other organisational principles: e.g. classification of details; cause and effect; comparison/contrast; description in terms of space and location; low-level interpretation and evaluation.

The essay

The 'essay' dominates writing in the senior secondary years — Years 11 and 12. Assigned essays become the normal diet of students writing in subjects such as English, History (Ancient and Modern), Geography, Economics, Home Economics, Textiles and Design, Art History, Industrial Technology and Biology.

The essay is the most challenging form of sustained writing faced by the senior secondary student. But many students are expected to perform competently in this genre without having had much practice or training in sustained writing in either junior secondary or primary school. The one exception is in English, where sustained writing (1-2 pages or more) is undertaken. More often than not this is narrative/creative/imaginative writing, though sometimes it is factual (description, information-giving, procedure, persuasion, etc.).

However, outside English, students are frequently involved only in copied or short-answer writing. Yet junior secondary students can be involved in sustained writing across the curriculum, and especially in the various forms of report writing (see previous section). If report writing is carefully and sensitively built into junior and middle secondary teaching, it can be an effective bridge into senior school essays.

The essay section of the *Writing K-12* material is based on five categories devised by Pam Peters and explained in more detail in her book *Strategies for Student Writers* (1985). The five categories, which involve an increasing degree of difficulty and challenge, can be considered in two groups.

Writing to inform

Expository:	concerned with setting out information.
Explanatory:	concerned with information plus low-level reasoning based on the information.

Writing to influence

Interpretive:	concerned with selling a point of view in a non-judgmental manner.
Evaluative:	concerned with selling a point of view in a judgmental manner.
Argumentative:	concerned with using an infra-structure of reasons to persuade.

The report has some affinity with the expository and explanatory essay. However, these two types of essay are generally longer than the report (3-4 pages) and are structured on the basis of Introduction→Body→Conclusion.

Both primary and junior secondary teachers should give their students opportunities to write sustained texts in the form of reports and elementary essays appropriate to their age and educational level. These will provide the experience and skills from which senior secondary and tertiary writing abilities can be developed.

Writing and learning

Writing can be one of the most effective means of learning. The act of writing is not just a matter of transcribing ideas waiting fully developed in the writer's mind — it is a powerful process for discovering and shaping meaning.

Writing can best be used as a means of learning when it is sustained over some length. Students cannot be expected to write capably and at length in the senior secondary school if they have not had a reasonable amount of practice and guidance in sustained writing earlier in their schooling. Encouraging and developing sustained writing in a variety of genres across the curriculum will both increase the power and scope of subject learning and enhance students' writing skills.

Arthur Applebee (1981) endorses this connection between sustained writing and effective learning. He deplores the kind of teaching which places the emphasis on specific items of information slotted into a largely teacher-organised text. Information should be integrated and presented in coherent, sustained prose, mainly of the student's own making.

In primary schools the emphasis of the process approach on 'ownership', 'responsibility' and 'control' has been applied mainly to narrative writing (real or fictitous) based on personal experience. Students are encouraged to undertake ownership of their own writing, to accept responsibility for making it powerful and effective, and to exercise the necessary textual 'controls' so that the purposes of the writing are successfully achieved.

In the secondary school, across the curriculum, this emphasis on student ownership, responsibility and control must be applied to written genres which are mainly non-narrative and require the student to use different principles of organisation. John Harris, writing on 'Organization in Children's Writing' (Harris & Wilkinson 1986, pp. 51-52), puts it this way.

> Stories, and many other types of writing, are organized on a time-related basis. To make up, or determine upon, the next bit, the writer has to ask 'What happened next?' The principle of time-related organization is very powerful and holds good whether we are dealing with a story deriving from the imagination, an account of a visit, of a biological process (such as germination) or a history essay retelling, say, the events of a battle. In fact, much of the writing in the middle years of schooling will be found to be organized on a time-related basis. However, as children progress [through their schooling] they will increasingly be required to tackle writing that is not organized in this way. Writing that involves making comparisons, presenting arguments or interpreting evidence is organized on different bases.

Much of the conferencing taking place about narrative writing is concerned only with 'content' or 'ideas'. But content can only be successfully produced and expressed by a competent use of 'form'. A concept of genre or 'text' therefore focuses on a happy integration of form and content. The concept of genre should be more explicitly built into the whole writing process framework based on narrative, as many student writers display a poor sense of narrative. But how much more should it become an integral part of the process of writing of non-narrative or non-time-related texts! The writing process needs genre and yet at the same time genre needs the writing process. *The writing process needs genre to provide direction and structure and genres need the writing process to provide 'mental space'.*

As John Harris says (Harris & Wilkinson 1986, pp. 59-60):

> . . . certain types of non-time-related writing require that the writer is able to make decisions about dividing content into syntactic units about which there is no inevitability and over which, as a consequence, the writer has sole control. The successful operation of this 'chunking' task requires, firstly, that the pupil can bring flexibility to his planning, a highly self-aware and reflective approach to his writing and that he has at his disposal a range of resources for sentence connection. In the second place, these types of writing require also, I believe, that the pupil is allowed 'mental space' — that is, time in which to experiment at a drafting stage — and, in addition, that he receives from the teacher positive and informed intervention on an individual basis. This second set of requirements is commonly ill-served both by the practice of writing in schools, and by the limited understanding of writing and the writing process possessed by many teachers.

At the beginning of this chapter I surveyed the existing developments in the secondary NSW *Writing K-12* materials, based on the belief that learning to write in a wide range of genres will also be writing to learn — writing that will empower the student in terms of knowledge and understanding. As Applebee suggests, the more we increase the students' opportunities and potential for writing (their own writing), the more we increase their ability to learn in each subject.

Empowering students both in their ability to write in the various genres required by their subject learning and in their ability to increase the power of their learning is certainly one of the most exciting educational challenges in the years ahead. Much lip service has been given to these ideals in the past. The 'speaking about' has always been easier than the 'doing'. Now, however, the doing is starting to be done. It is not easy, but the rewards are great.

11

John Collerson

WRITING FOR LIFE

Writing has been high on the agenda of teachers for several years now. We give it a prominent place in our classrooms for its value as a means of learning and recording and for the interest that students' writing can generate. We readily link writing with reading and with spoken language, and through this language and literacy we engage with the wider curriculum, as well as the life experience of each child. Thus we recognise writing as fundamental to learning and living — in the primary school and beyond.

Children need a good grounding in the process of writing, so that they can discover for themselves what it is like to get their ideas down on paper — or even into a word processor. They need to gain experience in different aspects of the process, such as drafting, revising and proofreading. The way children are introduced to writing in the process approach gives them a good start, one that is much more productive than those of earlier traditions. But, as this book has argued, children should also be introduced to specific genres of writing. When this should happen is a moot point and different teachers may well come up with different answers. This book has focussed mainly on Years 3 to 6, but some teachers have found that children in Years 1 and 2 can move beyond the early genres which are typical of those years.

This book has also shown that developing a wider focus on the genres of children's writing does not mean that we must move away from the process approach. Rather it means that we will sometimes get our children to focus on a particular kind of writing which serves a particular purpose. But we will still encourage them to prepare for that writing by rehearsal, perhaps involving some reading and research, making notes and jottings, mulling over the ideas, talking about them with others and so on. We will still encourage all the other features of the process: drafting, sharing, conferencing, revising, editing and proofreading, publishing and getting reader response.

But writing does not go on in a vacuum, and if we focus on specific genres, it is not just a matter of slipping one or two into the program just so that they can be ticked off at the end of the term. Genres arise from the broader

contexts of the curriculum which create needs for writing. Some of children's early writing will be related to talk about their own experience, both within and outside the school, because it is valuable for them to recall, reflect on and compare their experiences. As we have seen, that leads readily to some of the early genres like Observation/Comment and Recount, which in turn lead on to Narrative. The need for other genres will arise from activities, themes and units in various curriculum areas.

Orthodoxy and extremes

One criticism that has been made of the genre focus is that in practice it runs the risk of being oversimplified and distorted. The characteristics of each genre might be presented in a very mechanical way, especially by insensitive textbook writers and publishers. While it's true that this is possible, it's not just a problem for the genre focus — it is a risk that any approach has to run. In practice any approach is likely to be reinterpreted by some teachers to fit their own preconceptions and thus be distorted. This has certainly happened with the process approach, and there are horror stories about teachers insisting that all pupils write a fixed number of drafts for every piece of writing — three, four or even five drafts!

Undoubtedly there is a tendency to turn a good thing into an orthodoxy — a set of rules which must be followed, or procedures which become a ritual. Donald Graves (1984, p. 184 ff.) has expressed his concerns about how the process approach has become a set of orthodoxies for some people. What begins as a lively classroom practice, with all the freedom, the involvement, the children taking responsibility, the excitement and so on, is at risk of becoming something we do because it is our established routine. That's why we need to keep examining what we are doing and asking ourselves why we are doing it, and why we must guard against our approach to genre becoming rigid and inflexible.

What about free choice?

One aspect of the process approach which may seem to be challenged if we help children to focus on the genres available to them is the encouragement to find their own topics for writing, and the associated notions of ownership and control. It is true that if we are making use of the notion of genres, it will often be done in the context of some curriculum topic and the writing will be based on that topic. There can of course be some freedom of choice, but not the wide-ranging freedom which is normally encouraged in a process writing workshop. However, to narrow the choice, or even at times to remove it, is not inconsistent with the process approach. Elizabeth O'Connell has already referred to Donald Graves's recommendation that about 20 per cent of a writer's diet should be assigned, or set, and it is worth quoting the passage here.

> Still, there is an important place for the assigned topic: it belongs in the writer's diet.

> About twenty percent of a writer's diet ought to be assigned. But an assigned topic requires preparation: it requires the writer to read, interview, find the voice of opinion and concern in wrestling with the facts.
>
> Assigned topics mean that the teacher participates in the process of gathering data. Students see the teacher go through the process of doing the assignment with them. Modelling is never more important than in assigned writing, particularly writing in the content areas. Modelling means that the teacher demonstrates topic discovery, brainstorming, reading and notetaking, drafting, and final copy.
>
> (Graves 1984, p. 192)

It is important to let children find out that they can write, that they have things to 'say' in writing and that what they write about is valued, and this is a powerful argument for giving them plenty of freedom early in their writing experience. But even Graves has warned against turning this into a dogma that children must always choose their own topics. While some people would argue that children, especially those in the upper primary years, should have rather more guidance than Graves's 20 per cent figure suggests, the more important point in the above quotation is perhaps Graves's insistence on detailed modelling by the teacher. It is sometimes necessary to provide children with a very carefully structured experience of some particular topic so that they get to the point where they can write about it with confidence. In a completely free-choice approach there is a risk that the only students who really benefit are those from a middle-class literate background.

The choice of topics is not something which the genre theorists see in isolation. They are interested in how the writing is related to its context and how the purpose of the writing entails a particular genre. As we have seen, they argue that children need to learn to write in the genres that they will need as they progress through schooling. So while the process approach has emphasised ownership and responsibility on the part of the pupils, those advocating a focus on genres have emphasised the complementary roles of the teacher in providing good models for children to read, in modelling the writing through joint construction of text, in teaching children to recognise the stages of a genre and in leading them to an awareness of how they use language. The ultimate aim is to give the children more control of their writing.

Home and school and beyond

This notion of complementary roles of pupil and teacher raises the question of the role of the school. One significant role for schools is to build on children's individual and local experience and lead them to consider the wider community. Children first learn to write about their own personal experience in ways that reflect the relatively private world of home, neighbourhood and peer group. But we must help them to learn to cope with the more public world of the wider community, where writing has a wider range of purposes, and where the contexts which people have to face

impose various restrictions on the kinds of writing that they do. This does not mean that children have to abandon writing about private experience and the freedom to write in their own way, but it does mean that as they grow up they have to adjust the relationship between the private and the public aspects of their lives. This inevitably has implications for their opportunities for writing, the purposes for which they write and the kinds of writing that they do.

If we rely only on the topics that children bring with them to school, we may be avoiding the real issue of what the school should be offering. Since the school curriculum can open up for children a whole range of topics, issues, viewpoints, understandings, knowledge, attitudes and values, it is important that they be encouraged to write about them. Such writing involves a variety of purposes, and it is also important to help children learn to write in different genres to meet these purposes.

Writing like real writers

One of the principles underlying the process approach is that it is important for children to have the experience of writing like real writers — that is, like adult writers. This includes notions of writing as a process, such as not having to get everything right first go but learning to draft and revise and then having the experience of some kind of publication and a response from readers. It also includes being able to exercise some responsibility over the writing and to feel a sense of ownership for it. This in turn is associated with some freedom of choice over topics and the form of the writing. It is at this point that we need to ask what kind of adult writer is the model for this kind of writing.

Most adult writers — even professional writers — do not have completely free choice over what they write about. Often they write things because they have to. Some may enjoy writing, others may not. The topic and the necessity to write arise from the contexts in which they are living and working. The adult model that Donald Graves had in mind seems to be the free-lance journalist, perhaps someone like his friend and colleague, Donald Murray. A journalist has to keep writing and has to find topics to write about — ultimately, topics which will sell. A journalist must be prepared to tackle almost any topic, allowing for a bit of specialisation. So essentially the journalist's expertise is the process of writing — how to turn to any topic and work it up into something publishable and readable.

However, with many other people in the community writing has to serve some other cause — perhaps some body of knowledge or field of activity, perhaps some program for action. So it is not the process which is most important for the non-professional writer, but the purpose, the field, the audience, the mode — in short, the genre and its context.

I believe it is important for children to learn how to choose topics for their writing, not so much because of any adult model but because it is important for them to discover what they can write about and to have the experience of writing about things that they know and can write about with confidence. Yet children also need to learn how to write about things which they have

not chosen for themselves, and to cope with topics which come to them in the course of their schooling. The kinds of writing they will have to do in secondary school — and perhaps in tertiary education — while they may not be ideal, are nevertheless real writing and are things which children need to learn, even if only to cope with the exigencies of the selection process.

It is worthwhile keeping adult models in mind when we consider what kinds of writing experiences to provide for our children. It is useful for them to learn to write like real writers. But we should be realistic about the conditions under which real adults write.

What is writing for?

No matter at what level we are teaching we must consider the question of what writing is for. We can answer this kind of question in many ways, and perhaps we should keep in mind several possible answers. It is clear that people are expected to do some writing, certainly for their progress in the education system and quite likely also for their employment later on. There are some kinds of writing that most people will have to do and some of these are highly valued or associated with the exercise of power. People need to learn to write for these purposes if they are to 'get anywhere'. Besides these fairly predictable uses of writing, there is a whole range of possible uses: for personal pleasure, for learning, for recording and handling information and acquiring knowledge, for keeping in contact with people, for giving pleasure, entertainment, stimulation and even provocation through writing as verbal art, and even for therapeutic purposes. While not everyone will get involved in many of these uses of writing, we certainly want to open up for our pupils the full potential of writing.

The process approach has aimed for the development of all the potential uses of writing, not only for gaining access to power and social effectiveness, but also for the satisfaction of personal and private needs and wishes. With the explicit teaching of the genres there is a tendency to emphasise those uses of writing that are publicly valued and to play down individual or private experience.

Yet both of these emphases are important, both the public and the private uses of writing. We can't afford to ignore either and we must seek a balance between them. In this way we can help prepare our students for all the contexts and purposes for which they will need to write or want to write. In this way they will be prepared for writing for life.

APPENDIX

A Guide to Some Factual Materials for Primary Schools

Bernadette Schultz

This guide lists some of the recent series of non-fiction books that have been published for children. It is arranged by rough order of age, beginning with books suitable for younger children.

In the past there has been a significant lack of suitable non-fiction books for young Australian readers. The books that have been available were either far too difficult, out of date or not relevant to Australian children. However, educators, publishers and authors are now aware of the urgent need to provide suitable, interesting and attractive non-fiction books for primary school children, beginning at the kindergarten level.

There is also a great deal of excellent non-fiction material available in some of the latest language programs for primary schools. A brief list of some of these programs has been included at the end.

The prices listed were current at the time of publication and are subject to change.

Knowabouts by Henry Pluckhouse (Franklin Watts, London, 1987).
4 titles: *Countries, Numbers, Time, Weight.*
A new series which introduces simple mathematical concepts. The superb colour photographs support the simple text. Fine presentation.
Suitable for Preschool–Year 1. $13.95

Other series for young children published by Franklin Watts are ***Thinkabouts*** by Henry Pluckhouse and ***Talkabouts*** by Ruth Thomson.

Australian Animals by Peter Sloan and Ross Latham (Methuen, Sydney: Set 1, 1983; Sets 2 & 3, 1985; Set 4, 1986).
Each set is graded: Sets 1 & 2, Kindergarten-Year 1; Set 3, Years 1-3; Set 4, Years 2-4.
This is an extremely popular, award-winning series of non-fiction books for the beginning reader. The high interest subject material is highlighted by the excellent, large, full-colour photographs. Large, clear print is used and each title is available in two sizes: a small book for individual reading and a large book for shared reading. There are teacher's notes on the back of every book and the large size includes a set of reproducible student activity sheets.
Sets 1-3: small size – $15.95 per set of 8 titles; large size – $21.95 per set of 8 titles.
Set 4 (different format): large size – $23.95 per set of 4 titles; giant size – $42.95 per set of 4 titles. Complete set – $180.60.

Other series by Peter Sloan and Ross Latham published by Methuen are ***Planet Earth*** (1985) and ***The Prehistoric Giants*** (1986).

Beginners by Ron Thomas and Jan Stutchbury (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1987).
10 titles: e.g. *Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, The Farm, The Show, Sports.*
A new series for young children, covering a wide range of topics. The simple text is supported by colourful illustrations.
Suitable for Years 1-2. $5.95

Informazing (Methuen, Sydney, 1987).
6 titles: *Tadpole Diary, Life of the Butterfly, Animal Clues, Mystery Monsters, Caterpillar Diary, Book of Animal Records.*
A very exciting new series for young children. The books have a variety of text types and provide a simple introduction to the different topics. An important feature of this series is that the books carefully introduce the structure and format of non-fiction books.
The superb colour photographs, clear diagrams, charts, tables, maps, glossary, index and contents page all help to support the well-written text and enable young children to experience and enjoy non-fiction books.
An excellent Australian series.
Suitable for Year 1+.
Each title available in: giant book packs (1 large-size book, 3 standard-size books, teacher's guide and worksheets) – $29.95, and in mini-packs (4 standard-size books and work sheets) – $12.95. Friezes available for 3 titles – $14.95 each.
Another series published by Methuen is ***Amazing Australia,*** with 9 titles: e.g. *Australia's Prehistoric Animals, Australians in Antarctica, Eucalypts: A Guide.*
Suitable for Years 5-8. $13.95

Franklin Watts First Library (Franklin Watts, London, 1985).
24 titles: e.g. *Frogs and Toads, The Planets, Satellites, Crocodiles and Alligators, Spiders, Sharks, Space Shuttle.*
An excellent series for young children. The interesting text is in large print and uses a simple vocabulary. Excellent colour illustrations. A well-designed, simple index is included, as well as a 'look and find' section.
Suitable for Years 1-3. $9.95

Animals in the Wild (John Ferguson, Sydney, 1983-85).
21 titles: e.g. *Tiger, Panda, Lizard, Koala, Whale and Dolphin, Kookaburra, Penguin, Shark and Ray, Elephant, Giraffe, Snake, Bear, Turtle and Tortoise.*
A good series of natural science books for young children. Each page has an excellent colour photograph and two to four lines of text in large print. The simple descriptions and attractive photographs of the animals make this a popular series.
Suitable for Years 2-4. paperback $3.95

Let's Go: Countries (Franklin Watts, London, 1979-83).
40 titles, 8 new titles, 1986: *Finland, Ethiopia, Thailand, Hungary, Wales, Argentina, Czechoslovakia, Portugal.*
A well-established series covering major countries of the world. Provides a good introduction to life in other countries. The text is brief; some important words are in italics. Some of the vocabulary may be unfamiliar, e.g. place names and non-English words. Excellent colour photographs.
Suitable for Years 2-5. $10.95

Australian Picture Library (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1985).
Natural Wonders by Jenny Clarke. 20 titles: e.g. *The Franklin River – Tasmania, The Simpson Desert – Central Australia, The Three Sisters – New South Wales, Ware Rock — Western Australia, Ninety Mile Beach – Victoria.*
The Natural Environment by Graham Houghton and Julia Wakefield. 15 titles: e.g. *Wetlands, Salt Lakes, Deserts, Islands, Coral Reefs, Tropical Rainforests.*
Both of these series feature up-to-date colour photographs which are reduced versions of the Macmillan wallcharts. Each topic is presented in a double-page spread. The print is large and the text is brief, but not too over-simplified. The large photographs are an excellent resource for group discussions.
Suitable for Years 2-3+. $13.95

Behind the Scenes (Franklin Watts, London, 1985).
18 titles. 8 titles have full Australian content: *McDonalds, Port, Zoo, Car Factory, Hospital, Bakery, Airliner, Fishing Fleet.*
A very attractive series, giving insights into the workings of familiar places. The simple text is easy to read, very interesting and informative. An excellent series for young children. High quality, full-colour photographs and drawings. The contents page, index, glossary and list of facts and figures are well set out and easy to use.
Suitable for Years 2-5. $10.95

Australian States and Territories by David Morrissey (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1984).
8 titles: *Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia.*
A very popular series covering a wide range of topics. The text is simple and brief, with additional information in the labelled maps, full-colour photographs and gazetteer. A simple index and contents page are included.
Suitable for Years 3-5. $9.95 blackline masters book $24.95

Australian Fact Finders by Michael Dugan (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1979-81).
32 titles: e.g. *Local Councils, Surfing, Australian Seasons, Cricket, Wheat, Television, The Goldrushes, Police, Water, Banks, Trade Unions.*
A useful series covering a wide range of Australian topics. A very simple contents page and glossary are included.
Suitable for Years 3-5. $6.95
Fact Finders Activities (blackline masters) – $24.95.
Also available as a boxed set which includes the 32 titles, the 32 blackline masters and an index volume – $200.

Usborne First Science (Usborne, London, 1985).
3 titles: *Science Surprises, Science Tricks & Magic, The First Book of Science.*
Bright, colourful books with fun science experiments for children to do.
Suitable for Years 3-5. paperback $5.95

Other useful series of books from Usborne are:
Young Scientist Books (10 titles) Years 4-8
Mysteries and Marvels (8 titles) Years 3-6
Know How Books (12 titles) Years 3-6
Explainers (8 titles) Years 2-4
Usborne Guide To . . . (many titles for various age groups).

Families around the World (Wayland, Hove, 1984).
Titles include: *A Family in Ireland, A Family in France, A Family in Greenland.*
An excellent series that describes individual families from different countries. The lifestyle and day-to-day living of the family are covered in an informative and interesting manner. Excellent colour illustrations and clear maps complement the text. A glossary, contents page and index are included.
Suitable for Years 3-6. $13.95

Walkabout (Bay Books, Sydney, 1983-84).
6 titles: *The Rainforest, In the Garden, The Desert and Bush, On the Seashore, The River and Riverbank, The Sea.*
A very good series about nature in Australia. There are two pages for each topic with very interesting, well-labelled drawings that are closely linked to the simple text. A contents page and picture/panel index are included.
Suitable for Years 3-6. $5.95

Discovering Nature (Wayland, Hove, 1985-86).
Titles include: *Spiders, Birds of Prey, Hedgehogs, Worms, Bees and Wasps.*
A very good series with each topic presented on a double page. Interesting text with excellent colour photographs. A clear, simple glossary and index are included. Informative diagrams. English content.
Suitable for Years 3-6. $12.99

Project Australia Kit (Methuen, Sydney, 1986).
37 student books from 7 separate series: ***Australian Habitats*** (8 titles), ***Nature City*** (4 titles), ***200 Years*** (8 titles), ***Australian Communities*** (4 titles), ***Australian Families*** (4 titles), ***Our People*** (4 titles), ***New Technologies*** (5 titles), 1 teacher's handbook, *Reading Project Australia*, by Peter Sloan and Ross Latham.
A valuable classroom resource in an attractive bookshelf pack. Australian non-fiction books covering a wide variety of topics. Each book contains a simple contents page and index. Very good colour photographs, diagrams and maps are also included.
Suitability varies from Years 3 to 6.
Teacher's handbook – $19.95. Student books: 4 titles – $14.95 per set; 5 titles – $18.75 per set; 8 titles – $29.95 per set. Complete kit – $149.95. The teacher's handbook and the student books are available individually.

First Sight by Kate Petty (Franklin Watts, London, 1986).
6 titles: *Birds of Prey, Gorillas and Chimpanzees, Sharks, Lizards, Under the Sea, Poisonous Snakes.*
This new, attractive series explores the natural world and wildlife. Concise, simply presented text. High quality, full-colour photographs and diagrams will attract children's interest. Each book contains a glossary and index.
Suitable for Years 3-6. $15.95

Parents' Time Off (Egan Publishing, Melbourne, 1986).
3 titles: *Kids' Cooking* by Cecilia Egan, *Kids' Craft* by Sharon Theeder, *Kids' Games* by Damian Davies.
A series intended for parents; however, the books can be a useful classroom resource.

Hodder Australia Series (Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1984-86).
Australian Resources (6 titles), ***Australians at War*** (6 titles), ***Communications*** (4

titles), ***Everyday Life in Australia*** (11 titles), ***Famous Australians*** (8 titles), ***People at Work*** (2 titles), ***Peoples of Australia*** (11 titles).
Useful Australian information books covering a wide range of topics. Illustrated with drawings. A simple contents page and index are included. Some books also have a glossary.
Suitability varies from Years 3 to 7. paperback $3.95

Energy Today (Franklin Watts, London, 1985).
8 titles: *Water, Coal, Gas, Future Sources, Wind Power, Solar Power, Nuclear Power, Oil.*
A very informative series about popular up-to-date topics. The text is very concise and is in reasonably large print. Additional information is found in the well-labelled diagrams. Excellent colour photographs, simple contents page, index and glossary help to make this a worthwhile resource.
Suitable for Years 3-7. $11.95

People by Susan Pepper (Franklin Watts, London, 1985).
6 titles with Australian content: *Dentist, Model, Vet, Computer Manager, Dairy Farmer, Flight Attendant.*
A visually attractive series, written and photographed in Australia. Simple, compact text and good quality colour and black and white photographs. A glossary and index are included.
Suitable for Years 3-8. $9.95
15 titles with English content are also available.

You and Your Body (Wayland, Hove, 1983).
6 titles: *Your Heart and Lungs, Your Senses, The Structure of Your Body, Your Body Fuel, Your Brain and Nervous System, How You Grow and Change.*
A very detailed series which includes clear, well-labelled diagrams and full-colour photographs. The text is very informative and some words (in bold print) are explained in the glossary. The books have a very good, well-set-out contents page and index which conduce to locating specific information. A fine quality series in format, content and illustration.
Suitable for Years 4-6. $11.95

My First Library (Macdonald, London, 1985).
16 titles: e.g. *Computers, Sight, Festivals, Hearing, Weather, Touch and Feeling, Fuels and Energy, Farms.*
A colourful series with up-to-date information for younger children. Clear, simple format with large photographs, drawings and diagrams. A glossary, book list and index are included.
Suitable for Years 4-6. $12.95

A Children's History of Australia by David Morrissey (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1986).
8 titles: e.g. *Ancient Australia, The Spread of Settlement, The Golden Years, Two World Wars, This Changing Australia.*
A detailed coverage of Australia's history with a good balance of text and illustrations. Very good maps, drawings and colour photographs. A detailed contents page and a well-set-out index are included.
Suitable for Years 4-6. $9.95 blackline masters book $24.95

The Indo-Pacific Library by Graham Houghton and Julia Wakefield (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1986-87).
20 titles: e.g. *Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, New Zealand, French Polynesia, Australia, North and South Korea, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Kampuchea and Laos.*
A very up-to-date series looking at countries close to Australia. Excellent colour photographs and detailed maps support the informative text. Sub-headings are used effectively and enable children to find information quickly. A simple index and contents page are included, as well as a detailed gazetteer.
Suitable for Years 4-7. $9.95 blackline masters book $19.95

The Young Geographer Investigates by Terry Jennings (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986).
6 titles: *Deserts, Mountains, Polar Regions, Rivers, Temperate Forests, Tropical Forests.*
A well-written series which also includes excellent photographs, illustrations and diagrams. Children will find the sections 'Things to do' and 'Things to find out' extremely interesting. Each book contains a very good index and glossary.
Suitable for Years 4-7. paperback $7.95

Australian Aborigines by Alex Barlow and Marji Hill; Aboriginal consultant – Kevin Gilbert (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1987).
8 titles: *Families, Children Today, Meeting People, Ventures, Heroes of the Aboriginal Struggle, Artists Performers and Writers, The Craft of the Stone: Aboriginal Technology, The Land and the Dreaming: Aboriginal Religions.*
This new series provides children with interesting insights into the Aboriginal culture. Excellent colour photographs, with captions. The simple contents page and index are easy to use. A valuable resource for Australian children.
Suitable for Years 4-8. $9.95 blackline masters book $14.95

Animals of Oz by Mary Lancaster and Jill Morris (Rigby Education, Melbourne, 1986).
14 titles: *Kangaroo, Dingo, Platypus, Emu, Echidna, Lizard, Magpie & Kookaburra, Possum, Numbat, Wombat, Lyrebird, Koala, Brolga, Ibis & Jabiru.*
An interesting new series of books about Australian animals, containing fiction and non-fiction as well as activities. Teacher's notes are included.
Suitable for Years 5-6. boxed set $42.25

The Australia File (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1984-85).
5 titles: *Collecting Things, Festivals, Bushrangers, Emergency, Astronomy for the Southern Sky.*
The format is interesting with good photographs, diagrams, charts and drawings. Detailed information for the upper primary level. An index and contents page are included.
Suitable for Years 5-7. $7.95
Another series published by Thomas Nelson is ***The Port Phillip Project*** (6 students' books, 3 teacher's resource books). Suitable for Years 5-8.

People in Australia (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1983-84).
16 titles: e.g. *The Greeks, The Irish, The Italians, The English, The New Zealanders, The Vietnamese, The Yugoslavs.*

A very useful series that looks closely at the migrant groups in Australia today and gives a brief history of the country of origin and details of the culture (e.g. food, language, customs, way of life). A simple contents page is included.
Suitable for Years 5-7. $6.95 blackline masters book $14.95.
Boxed set $100

Australian Colour Library (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1984-85).
14 titles: e.g. *Australian Explorers, Birds, Mammals, Money, Plants, Transport.*
Attractive information books using a large format. The large coloured photographs are of very high quality and are accompanied by clear, simplified text. Each book contains a simple contents page and index.
Suitable for Years 5-8. $14.95

Kingfisher Kingpins, revised editions (Kingfisher, London, 1986).
Titles include: *The Superbook of Ballet, The Superbook of Bikes, The Superbook of Flags, The Superbook of the Universe, The Superbook of our Planet, The Superbook of Gymnastics.*
The simple, brief text offers a good introduction to the topic. Clear headings, colour photographs/illustrations and diagrams all help to support the text. A brief index is included.
Suitable for Years 5-8. paperback $4.95

LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Bookshelf (Martin Educational/Ashton Scholastic, Sydney, 1986-).
Eureka Treasure Chest (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1987-).
Expressways (Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1982-).
Ginn Reading Program (Ginn, Aylesbury/Ashton Scholastic, Gosford, 1985-).
Interaction (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1987-).
Mount Gravatt Reading Series (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1986-).
The New Ready to Read (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1986).
Reading 360: Australian Content Readers (Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1984-).
Social Themes and Language K-7: Primary Education Social Studies Resource (Collins Dove, Melbourne, 1986-87).
Southern Cross (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1987).
Young Australia (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1983-87).

Suggested Reading

If you want to follow up some of the ideas discussed in this book you will find some suggestions in this section, though it does not pretend to be a complete bibliography.

If you are not already familiar with the process approach, any of the books in this first group will give you a start. Some of them are available from PETA, some from elsewhere. They are listed more or less in the order in which they first appeared.

R. D. Walshe (ed.), *Donald Graves in Australia: 'Children want to write . . .'*, PETA, Sydney, 1981.

R. D. Walshe, *Every Child Can Write!*, PETA, Sydney, 1981 (esp. Parts II & IV).

Jan Turbill (ed.), *No Better Way to Teach Writing!*, PETA, Sydney, 1982.

Jan Turbill, *Now, We Want to Write!*, PETA, Sydney, 1983.

Andrea Butler and Jan Turbill, *Towards a Reading-Writing Classroom*, PETA, Sydney, 1984.

Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC), Education Department of SA, Adelaide, 1984 (esp. Units 6-9).

Kathleen J. Hill, *The Writing Process: One Writing Classroom*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1984.

Gaelene Rowe and Bill Lomas, *A Writing Curriculum: Process and Conference*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1984.

Jo-Ann Parry and David Hornsby, *Write On: A Conference Approach to Writing*, Martin Educational, Sydney, 1985.

If you are already *au fait* with the process approach but want to read more in this area, here are some books to try.

Calkins, Lucy McC., *Lessons from a Child: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing*, Heinemann Educational, London, 1983.

Calkins, Lucy McC., *The Art of Teaching Writing*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH, 1986. (This gives some recognition to the need to teach children particular types of writing for specific purposes.)

Cambourne, Brian et al., *Process Writing with English and Non-English Speaking Children in Kindergarten Classes*, Centre for Studies in Literacy, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, n.d.

Graves, Donald H., *A Researcher Learns to Write: Selected Articles and Monographs*, Heinemann Educational, Exeter, NH, 1984.

Graves, Donald H., *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*, Heinemann Educational, Exeter, NH, 1983.

Murray, Donald M., *Learning by Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching*, Boynton/Cook, Montclair, NJ, 1982.

Newkirk, Thomas and Atwell, Nancie (eds), *Understanding Writing: Ways of Observing, Learning and Teaching K-8*, Northeast Regional Exchange, Chelmsford, MA, 1982.

Walshe, R. D., March, Paul and Jensen, Dot (eds), *Writing and Learning in Australia*, Dellasta Books, Ashwood, Vic, 1986. (This also includes a few contributions from the genre point of view.)

As for genres, perhaps the best place to start is with books that are readily available.

Christie, Frances (ed.), *Children Writing: Study Guide*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1984 (esp. Sections 1 & 2 by Frances Christie and Section 3 by Joan Rothery).

Kress, Gunther, *Learning to Write*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1982 (esp. Ch. 5).

Stewart-Dore, Nea (ed.), *Writing and Reading to Learn*, PETA, Sydney, 1986. (This is generally concerned with literacy in the content areas and could serve as a good introduction to a genre-based approach.)

Beyond these there is a growing list of publications. You could get the ones published by the Sydney University Linguistics Department by writing to or ringing the secretary of the Department.

Christie, Frances, 'Some current issues in first language writing development', *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1985.

Christie, Frances, 'Learning to write: where do written texts come from?' *Papers from the Twelfth Australian Reading Association Conference*, A.R.A., Perth, 1986.

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